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HOW ENGLAND SAVED EUROPE

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NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

WHEN LIEUTENANT-COLONEL OF THE FIRST BATTALION OF CORSICA

From the painting by H. E. F. PHILIPPOTEAUX

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HOW ENGLAND SAVED EUROPE:

THE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR (1793-1815)

BY

W. H. FITCHETT, B.A., LL.D.

AUTHOR OF "DEEDS THAT WON THE EMPIRE"
"FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG," ETC.

WITH PORTRAITS, FACSIMILES, AND PLANS

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I

FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES TO EGYPT

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1899

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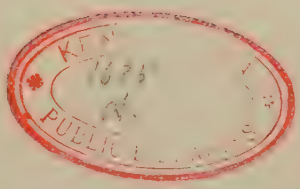

"England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example."—PITT'S LAST PUBLIC WORDS.

"A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants."—MACAULAY.

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PERIOD I

ENGLAND AND THE REVOLUTION

PERIOD I.—ENGLAND AND THE REVOLUTION

(*From the Declaration of War, February* 3, 1793, *to the Directory, October* 26, 1795.)

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1793. Feb. 3. France declares war against England.
,, 11. England declares war, and joins Prussia, Austria, &c., against France.
April 20. Duke of York lands in Holland.
May 8. First fight between French and English at Vicogne.
,, 23. Battle of Famars.
,, 25. Treaty between Spain and England.
June 2. Fall of Girondists.
July 28. Capture of Valenciennes.
Aug. 20. Toulon surrendered to English (under Lord Hood).
,, 30. Treaty between England and Austria.
Sept. 8. Duke of York abandons siege of Dunkirk.
Oct. 16. Execution of Marie Antoinette—Reign of Terror, lasting till July 1794.
Dec. 19. Bonaparte at Toulon.
Recapture of Toulon by French.
1794. Feb. 19. Hood captures Fiorenzo (Corsica).
Mar. 22. Capture of Martinique; of Bastia, April 22; of Sainte Lucia, April 4.
April 5. Execution of Danton.

1794. June 1. Lord Howe's victory.
,, 21. George III. proclaimed King of Corsica.
July. Prussia, Holland, Spain, and Portugal recede from Coalition against France.
,, 28. Fall of Robespierre.
Aug. 10. Capture of Calvi by the British.
Sept. 14. Duke of York defeated at Bois le Duc.
,, 20. Capture of Sierra Leone by French.
Oct. 6. Recapture of Guadeloupe by the French.
1795. Jan. 19. Holland joins France against England.
Feb. 18. Defensive alliance between England and Russia.
Mar. 13. Hotham defeats French fleet off Leghorn.
April 5. Peace of Basle—Prussia makes terms with France.
May 16. United Provinces join France against England—Dutch Flanders ceded to France.
,, 20. Close of French Convention—Jacobin rising crushed.
June 7. Cornwallis defeats French squadron off Belleisle.
,, 23. Bridport defeats French squadron off L'Orient.
July 21. Expedition to Quiberon.
,, 22. Spain joins France and declares war against England.
Sept. Capture of Cape of Good Hope from the Dutch.
Oct. 5. Capture of Ceylon from the Dutch.
,, 26. Directory established.
Nov. 25. Partition of Poland by Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

HOW ENGLAND SAVED EUROPE:

THE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR

(1793–1815)

CHAPTER I

THE MARCH OF THE GUARDS

AT half-past six on the morning of February 25, 1793, three battalions of the Guards, equipped for foreign service, were drawn up on the parade-ground in what is now the rear of the Horse Guards. A great crowd stood to watch the spectacle, and the keen winds of the bitter February dawn smote, as with the stroke of a whip, the silent lines of the steadfast soldiers and the swaying, shivering masses of the spectators. At seven, the king, the Prince of Wales, and a brilliant staff rode on to the ground. "His Majesty," the *Annual Register* dutifully records, in characters now grown faded, "was mounted on a beautiful white charger and wore a general's uniform;" but it may be suspected, with his red face,

his saucer-like eyes, his stumpy figure, not looking very martial, in spite of curvetting steed and glittering uniform. "The staff took up its position; the battalions," once more to quote the *Annual Register*, "passed His Majesty by companies, moving to slow time, the officers saluting as they passed. They then went off by Storey's Gate, and took the road to Greenwich." The king and the royal staff fell into the rear of the marching troops; next, in stately carriages with outriders, came the queen and a cluster of princesses, while the ordered and steady tread of the Guards ran in deep, sustained undertone beneath the shouts of the crowd.

And with that morning scene in a London street begins the drama of the greatest of English wars. England never sent braver soldiers to the field than the men who formed this tiny column on its march to Greenwich. As the long line swung into column for its march, there stretched unseen before its files a hundred fields of battle. The roll of its drums was to sound across half the world. The tramp of the disciplined feet ran forward through twenty years, till it deepens into the mighty tumult of Waterloo. Those three battalions, in a word, head the great procession of gallant soldiers who, for the next twenty years, in strange lands and under strange skies, were to fight and die for the cause of England against the wild menace of Revolutionary France and the world-threatening despotism of Napoleon.

And it is a curious fact that when, for the first time in this far-stretching war, Frenchmen and Englishmen met in the actual shock of battle, these three particular battalions were the attacking party, and the fight took place at Vicogne, some ten miles from Waterloo, where the long strife, more than twenty years afterwards, was to end!

As a companion-piece to that scene in front of the Horse Guards in 1793, let another picture be drawn. On July 31, 1815, the *Bellerophon* is lying at Portsmouth, a stately line-of-battle ship, of the old, massive, bluff-bowed type. In its cabin are four persons. Two are British officers, Lord Keith and Sir Henry Bunbury, a third is their secretary, the fourth is Napoleon, his sallow face furrowed with the passions of so many battlefields and the pride of so many years of empire. Waterloo is six weeks past; the Empire has faded like a vision; the armies of France have perished. These British officers have come to tell Napoleon that St. Helena, a splintered rock set in the solitary wastes of the Atlantic, is henceforth to be his prison.

Napoleon protests vehemently. St. Helena is hateful to him; he would prefer, he says, "death or Botany Bay." "Remember," he cries, "what I have been, and how I have stood among the sovereigns of Europe." "I have made war upon you for twenty years," he tells this little group of Englishmen; but England, he urges, if the mightiest and most stubborn,

is also the most generous of all his foes. He asks for nothing better, indeed, than to spend his last days breathing its air and cultivating domestic British virtues! He will become a British citizen! "I demand," he exclaims, "to be received as an English citizen! How many years entitle me to be domiciliated?" He will wait under parole for the necessary four years before he can take out letters of naturalisation. Having vainly tried to overthrow these obstinate islanders, in brief, he will now renounce France and himself become an Englishman, and wear broadcloth, and devote himself to the sober-suited pieties of civic life! And with that scene Napoleon practically vanishes from history. Nothing is left but those six shrewish and ignoble years at St. Helena.

. . . . . .

"I HAVE MADE WAR UPON YOU FOR TWENTY YEARS." Napoleon, with somewhat vague arithmetic, condenses into that brief sentence the chief aim of his great career as a soldier, the whole policy of his Empire. And the satire of history is illustrated by the fact that these words were spoken as a prisoner in the cabin of a British man-of-war, and to a couple of British officers, by the greatest military genius the world has known since Hannibal, and who had fought against England as Hannibal fought against Rome; "the man of a thousand thrones," who had made and unmade kings, and entered well-nigh every capital in Europe in turn as a conqueror.

His twenty years of war with England had landed him *there!* Yet the war was a contest—to use Napoleon's own phrase—between 60,000,000 and 16,000,000; between a nation of soldiers and "a nation of shopkeepers;" betwixt the flitting statesmen, the accidental generals, the uncertain policy of a popular Government, working by the tedious forms of a Parliament, and a soldier of consummate genius, clothed with absolute power, and having—at one stage of the conflict at least—the resources of more than half Europe at his disposal. And this great contest, so apparently unequal in its conditions, found its dramatic close in that historic interview on board the *Bellerophon!*

The tale of the Twenty Years' War with Napoleon is a great story; a resounding epic rather than a drab-coloured page of pallid and slow-moving history; an Iliad of battles, sieges, and invasions. Great figures move across the stage; great events shake the world; passions and heroisms, virtues and vices, all on the antique scale, are shown in action. The tumult and fury of a revolution sweeping across France shook every throne in Europe. From that revolution emerges a soldier with genius equal to Alexander or Hannibal, and with an ambition more ruthless than either Alexander or Hannibal knew. He turns the fierce energy of the revolution into the channel of foreign conquest. He makes himself the master of the Continent. He dreams of uni-

versal empire. England alone, with the secret of her strength in the sea, stands in his path. So begins his great, long-enduring duel with England, in which the fiery valour of a conquering race of Celtic stock is set against the stubborn endurance of a nation of dogged Anglo-Saxon blood.

The actors in this slow-evolving drama are on a great scale. If, on the one side, we have the commanding figure of Napoleon, with his insatiable ambition, his subtle Italian intellect, his unsurpassed mastery of war, on the other side, too, there are great figures: Pitt in the Cabinet, Nelson on the quarter-deck, Wellington on the field of battle. It was a contest which filled sea and land with its tumult, which was waged on three continents, and for well nigh the span of a generation. The Nile, Trafalgar, Waterloo—words that still stir the blood of the English-speaking race under all skies—are glittering syllables in that record; the Peninsular war is but an episode in it; St. Helena a sordid postscript.

It was a contest which in its results saved freedom and delivered the modern world from a despotism as absolute as that of which the later Cæsars are the type. And it is a picturesque illustration not only of the complete and dramatic triumph won by England in this Titanic conflict, but of the instrument by which that triumph was mainly won, that, at its close, Napoleon stands a volubly complaining prisoner in

the cabin of a British man-of-war. The *Bellerophon*, which, fitly enough, was one of Nelson's ships at Trafalgar, is the representative of the great fleets which won for England the queenship of the sea, and so made it possible to overthrow Napoleon on the land.

The struggle has left a legacy of splendid memories, not to the motherland alone, but to her children under every sky. And who shall assess the value of these memories to the new and vaster "England" of to-day? Great Britain is now an empire whose provinces are sprinkled over all the seas and lands of the planet. "England" is no longer a single community; it is a hundred isolated communities, set in new and strange environments of climate and landscape. A common citizenship seems to be made impossible by the separating force of space itself. Nations are usually mere crystallisations of geography; the bank of a river, the flow of a sea-tide, the curve of a mountain chain defines and limits them. But the new "England," if it is to keep its unity, must do it in spite of geography. It is in peril of breaking asunder by the mere compulsion of its own geographical vastness, or by the friction of hostile "interests" bred of geographical distance. But the pride which is born of common memories—the sense of partnership in a common ancestry and history—can vanquish the separating force of space. It is a subtle and enduring energy, which across even

such wide spaces of the divorcing sea can hold in exultant kinship the far-scattered fragments of the English-speaking household. It is no ignoble task to quicken those great memories into a more vivid life by telling afresh the greatest tradition of our race, the story of the Twenty Years' War with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France.

The political history of England during this period, and the continental wars of Napoleon, do not enter into the scope of the present work. These form, so to speak, merely the background of the picture. They are dealt with only as far as they influence each phase in turn of the long struggle betwixt Great Britain and Revolutionary or Imperial France. Nothing is attempted here but a plain and, it is hoped, a living and realistic account of the greatest war England has ever waged. And, as it is the story of a great war which is being told, the chief actions by sea and land in the struggle are described in some detail. It may be added that, instead of telling the story in the mechanical order of time—a method fruitful of confusion when events occurring simultaneously, at widely different points on sea and land, and without relation to each other, have to be described—the plan is adopted of grouping the war into distinct periods, and making each period a complete story.

The war, it will be found, falls naturally into distinct sections, which sometimes, indeed, measured

by the almanac, overlap, but which have sharply defined characteristics, and each of which represents a separate stage in the great drama of the Twenty Years' War. There are six of such periods.

The first stage extends from the declaration of war by France on February 1, 1793, to the establishment of the Directory on October 26, 1795. During this period the European Powers looked on the Revolution as a mere destructive conflagration, a political pestilence, which threatened to infect all Europe, and which must be stamped out at any cost. And the great Powers believed they could stamp it out! England, it is to be noted, did not, on the whole, share in this view of the Revolution or of its menace to the world's order. It joined in the struggle reluctantly, and only when Revolutionary France, eager to shape all governments to its own pattern, thrust war upon it. This stage of the struggle is dealt with under the title of "England and the Revolution."

The second period extends from the Directory to the battle of Camperdown, October 11, 1797. The Revolution has now passed out of the stage of mere domestic terrors and bloodshed; it is militant, aggressive, exultant, fiercely eager to carry the principles of the Revolution over the whole area of the civilised world. And it has the strength as well as the passion of a new religion. It proclaims war against all governments and peace to all peoples.

It is tasting the first raptures of success. Its armies are triumphant on every frontier. England, on the other hand, suffers strange eclipse. She has lost every ally. She is perplexed with domestic troubles. Her harvests have failed. Her shores are threatened with invasion. Her fleets are in mutiny. There is civil war in Ireland. It is the darkest hour in the fortunes of England! This stage of the struggle may not unfittingly be described as "The Hour of England's Danger."

In the third period a great figure steps on the stage, a figure which henceforth dominates and shapes the whole history of the struggle. Napoleon—or, to give him the name he still bore, Bonaparte—is not yet Emperor; he is only twenty-eight years old; but the splendours of the Italian campaigns of 1796–97 are about him like some glittering halo. Out of anarchy is usually evolved a despot; and France, exhausted by the distractions and passions of the Revolution, needs a master. It is clear that Bonaparte, a soldier of genius, with insatiable ambition, and neither scruples nor principles, will become the master of France. And already, if half unconsciously, there begins that great duel with England which for well-nigh the space of a generation was to constitute the history of Europe. In Paris, to use Napoleon's own phrase, "the pear is not ripe;" he must seek some other adventure. And in the brain of this youngest of the great generals of all time are strange dreams

of conquest in the musky and purple East. But the expedition to Egypt was essentially a blow at England, for the road to India lies through Egypt. The story of the struggle betwixt England and Bonaparte on that field, from the battle of the Nile to the surrender of the last French garrison at Alexandria, is told as a complete narrative, under the heading of "Bonaparte in the East."

In the fourth period the sea is the battlefield on which Napoleon and England contend, and the struggle reaches its most heroic stage. Napoleon, as First Consul and as Emperor, is supreme on the Continent; England remains the one unsubdued Power. Napoleon can only strike at her across the sea; England is safe from his utmost force while her ships ride supreme on the ocean. The mastery of the sea therefore becomes the centre round which the struggle revolves. So we have the story of the League of the Northern Powers, of Copenhagen, of the great blockades, of that greatest of sea-fights, Trafalgar, which ended one phase of this long duel for the mastery of the sea, and of the Berlin Decree and the Orders in Council which revived that conflict in a new form. This period extends from the Confederacy of the Northern Powers against England in 1801 to the rising of the Spanish nation against Napoleon — a direct result of Napoleon's Continental system—in 1808: its story is told under the title of "The Struggle on the Sea."

Napoleon can only enforce his Continental system by gaining the mastery, through conquest or alliance, of the whole European coast-line. Every customs-house in Europe must fly his flag and carry out his policy. It was chiefly under this evil necessity, and as an incident in the struggle against England, that Spain was seized. The result was to give to England an arena on which she could confront, under favourable conditions, the military strength of Napoleon. So she enters the Peninsula as a military power, aided not by a coalition of sovereigns, but by the uprising of a people. She has already contributed to the struggle the most famous sailor of all time, Nelson; now Wellington emerges, a soldier whose genius is equal to that of Napoleon himself. The campaigns in the Peninsula thus form a complete episode.

In the sixth period the great drama reaches its climax. Nothing remains to be told but the story of the Hundred Days and of Waterloo, with St. Helena as a mere dramatic anti-climax and postscript.

CHAPTER II

THE WITCHES' CAULDRON OF THE REVOLUTION

FOUR great wars mark the eighteenth century: the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years' War, the War of American Independence, and the Revolutionary War. In each of these France and England confront each other, first or last, as antagonists. Seeley, in his "Expansion of England," says the rivalry betwixt these two Powers in the eighteenth century constitutes a sort of second Hundred Years' War, such as that which filled the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with its tumult. At bottom, he adds, the issue was always the same. It was a stupendous duel for the New World. It was not England, a cluster of islands in the Western Atlantic, contending with France, a purely European kingdom, for the primacy of European politics; it was a wrestle betwixt Greater Britain and Greater France for the prize of a vast colonial empire.

That generalisation is, no doubt, true as regards the earlier wars of the eighteenth century, though perhaps the nations themselves engaged in the

struggle were unconscious—or only half conscious —of its meaning. Chatham, with his wizard-like glance, saw, it is true, into the heart of the contest of his time. He would conquer America, he said, in Germany! Macaulay, in an oft-quoted sentence, sums up the consequences of the invasion of Silesia by Frederick the Great: "In order that he might rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend, black men fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the Great Lakes of North America." But that epigram needs to be inverted to become accurate. Great battles were fought on the Rhine and on the Danube to determine which nation should own the Mississippi or be supreme on the Ganges. But the actors in the struggle had a very dim vision of its underlying meaning and far-off consequences. In the main, it was the impulse of unreasoning instinct rather than of intelligent and conscious purpose which made England maintain the great struggle with a courage so dogged and at a cost of blood and treasure so vast. "We seem," says Seeley, "to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind!"

But does Seeley's generalisation explain the Twenty Years' War? Was Revolutionary France thinking of Canada when it declared war on England in 1793? Or was Napoleon aiming at Calcutta when he hutted his invading army at Boulogne in 1803–4? Seeley

insists on stretching his generalisation to this point. "Napoleon," he says, "did not care about Europe." Europe, in brief, bored him! "He is the Titan whose dream it is to restore that Greater France which had fallen in the struggles of the eighteenth century, and to overthrow that Greater Britain which had been established on its ruins." He enters Vienna or Berlin as a conqueror, that is, only because through it lies the road to Quebec or to Calcutta! He overruns Europe merely as a preliminary to regaining America. He invades Spain and Portugal because their fleets will supply him with weapons to be used against England, the ogre that had swallowed so many colonies!

But an historical generalisation, like one of Carlyle's much-hated "formulas," may be stretched till it cracks. The Twenty Years' War, in its earlier stage at least, was a conflict betwixt hostile political ideals: betwixt the wild ferment of revolution in France, and the forces that make for order and stability, as represented by England. It was a contest made inevitable by the crusade against all governments and institutions which this new Republic, born in a revolution and representing a revolution, undertook. In its later stages it was a conflict betwixt the Titanic ambition of Napoleon, and the one nation in which freedom still found shelter, and which stood betwixt Napoleon and his dream of a world-empire.

When the French Revolution broke out, it, no

doubt, had on its side a deep current of English sympathy. It seemed to be the cause both of humanity and of freedom. France was only doing in the eighteenth century, and in a French fashion, what England had done in the sixteenth century, and done again in the seventeenth. English divines blessed the movement; English poets set it to rhyme; English politicians made speeches in its honour; English philosophers wrote treatises in its justification. Wordsworth saw in the Revolution at its birth nothing but the spectacle of

> "France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming born again!"

Jules Simon has described, in a familiar passage, the effect the Revolution produced on many generous minds outside France. "The foreigner," he said, "loved it as much as we did. Fox spoke up for it. Goethe blessed it. Schiller defended it. Byron celebrated it." When Louis XVI., in 1789, summoned the States-General, it seemed to English eyes as though an age-long and cruel despotism was at last breaking into radiant flower as a constitutional government. The father of Maria Edgeworth brought up his son on Rousseau's methods. Thomas Day, the author of "Sandford and Merton," chose and trained his intended wife—with unfortunate results—on the principle of the "Nouvelle Heloise." What was the capture of the Bastille itself but John Howard's

philanthropy translated, with much drum-beating and some unhappy bloodshed, into French terms? "How much the greatest event it is that has happened in the world," said Fox, "and how much the best!"

As a matter of severe fact, on that mad Sunday when French patriotism, in fiery mood and with shrill tumult, swept across the drawbridge of the Bastille on De Launay and his poor hundred asthmatic veterans, the Bastille itself resembled nothing so much as an obsolete, rusty, and almost-forgotten rat-trap. Whether the Bastille of Latude's memoirs and of Louis Blanc's rhetoric ever existed is doubtful. Its records, after the prosaic modern fashion, have been examined, and the result destroys many blood-curdling traditions. The inmates of that famous prison enjoyed many comforts. Captivity was softened with flute and viols, with libraries and social games. Latude's real sorrows are of the crumpled rose-leaf order. He complains that his fowls were not larded, that his shirts had not lace cuffs. Latude's "iron ring worn round his body," over which readers of his story have shuddered, seems to have been an ingenious fiction. What he wore was a truss. The Man in the Iron Mask, it turns out, actually wore a mask of velvet; and many of the horrors of the Bastille, when examined in the dry light of sober history, undergo a like transformation. What was painted as iron proves to have been velvet. The

Bastille held, at the moment of its fall, only seven prisoners, four of whom were forgers, two were idiots, and one was detained at the request of his own family. In three centuries exactly 300 prisoners had been committed to its cells, an average of one a year.

The Bastille, in a word, was an outworn symbol: but, it must be admitted, it was, if only by force of the traditions which had gathered round it, the symbol, ancient and far-seen, of an irresponsible despotism. Its eight grim towers frowning over Paris were the concrete expression of a tyranny which had grown inert, but which still both shocked the natural conscience and affronted human intelligence. Englishmen, bred in freedom, and stubborn in their hate of all that threatens freedom, saw the whole fabric of despotic France—the France of Louis XIV.—tumble into ruins with stern and more or less articulate approval. "The present convulsions in France," said Pitt in 1790, "must sooner or later culminate in general harmony and regular order . . . and then France will stand forth as one of the most brilliant Powers of Europe."

But the French Revolution did not follow English ideals or satisfy the English conscience. Events travelled too fast and too far. The revolt against despotism grew lunatic in its mood; it took a complexion of blood. The States-General blossomed into the National Assembly. In a single night the Church was destroyed, the nobility swept away, and all dis-

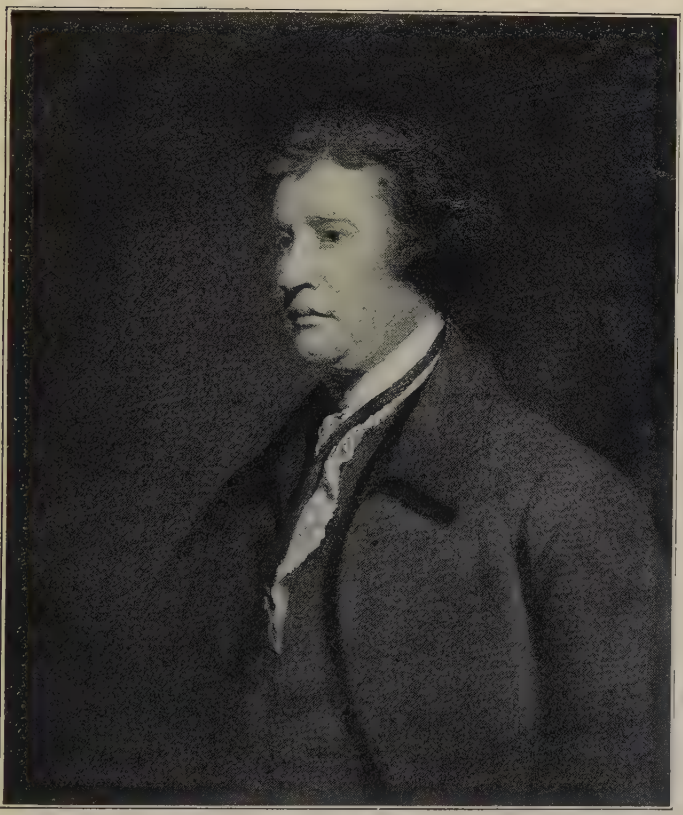
tinctions of classes abolished. That wild procession, with human heads on pikes, which eddied round the captured Bastille was a portent seen from afar by the startled nations, and of dreadful significance. "Why," said the unhappy French king, when he heard the tale, "this is a revolt." "Sire," he was answered, "it is not a revolt; it is a revolution."

And it was a revolution such as Europe had never yet seen. It brought into the politics of the eighteenth century—if only as a passing spasm—the wild ferocity of the Jacquerie of the fourteenth century. And at that spectacle English sympathy chilled to the temperature of an icicle. It hardened into a hatred which had in it a flavour of both scorn and fear. The typical Englishman loves order almost as much as he hates tyranny. He despises emotion that rises to screaming-point. He has an inextinguishable respect for precedent. Revolt for him, even when it means a recoil from despotism, must move on lines of ancient precedent. It must clothe itself in decorous constitutional forms. Unnecessary bloodshed pricks the Englishman's humanity; idle destruction affronts his common-sense; grinning atheism startles his conscience. Liberty dancing the carmagnole and flourishing a pike crowned by a human head—a head that, not seldom, carried flowing womanly tresses—is to him a thing abhorrent.

Burke described the French Revolutionists as "the ablest architects of ruin" the world had yet

seen. "They have prepared," he said, "a sort of digest of Anarchy called 'the Rights of Man!'" "They have pulled to the ground," he added, "their army, their navy, their commerce, their arts, and their manufactures." His "Reflections on the French Revolution" was, in fact, a passionate and resounding indictment of the Revolution as a menace alike to civilisation and religion. It threatened, he declared, to fling orderly society throughout Europe into the abyss. "Whenever a separation is made," Burke said, "between liberty and justice, neither is safe;' and in his famous "Reflections" Burke undoubtedly was the spokesman of England. The effects of the Revolution, he cried in alarm, "are about us; they are upon us. They shake the public security; they menace private enjoyment. They dwarf the growth of the young; they break the quiet of the old." Paine complained that Burke "pitied the plumage, and forgot the dying bird;" and Shelley used that sentence as a motto for a once famous pamphlet. But, as Mr. Edward Dowden answers on Burke's behalf, "he did not believe that plucking away the plumage was the best way of restoring the dying bird to vigour and enabling it to fly."

The truth is that Burke, by natural temperament and bent of character, was from the first opposed to the Revolution. He never, like Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and Southey, passed through a friendly mood towards it. He saw in it always the threaten-



EDMUND BURKE

From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

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ing sign of a world-wide catastrophe. He understood neither the forces behind the Revolution nor the degree of moral justification it possessed. He was bound up, to quote Morley, "in order, peace, and gently enlarged precedent." He dreaded fanatics, knew nothing but vehement scorn for theorisers, and felt a hate richly flavoured with contempt for atheists. And he had to look on and see an ancient kingdom a prey to fanatics, atheists, and theorisers, all busy in setting as wide a gulf "as ruin and bloodshed could make betwixt themselves and every incident in their national history and every institution of their land." His "Reflections on the French Revolution" made articulate all that was best, and not a little that was worst, in Burke: his love of ordered liberty, his hate of cruelty, his suspicion of fanaticism, as well as his dislike of change, his pedantic incapacity to make allowances for the excesses of a great popular movement, most of all of a movement sweeping over a nation like the French, a people of whom, as a great Frenchman has himself declared, "There never was a nation more led by its sensations, and less by its principles."

Burke himself shared that characteristic of the British mind—"its unalterable perseverance in the wisdom of prejudice,"—which he half admired and half scorned. "I love," he said, "a manly, moral, regulated liberty;" and he could not recognise liberty when at the moment of its birth, and with all

its pulses shaken with the passions of a revolution, it did not show instant and visible signs of being "manly, moral, and regulated." Burke, that is, as he looked at the Revolution, lost his sense of perspective. He lost, too, as he gazed at the turmoil and confusion of Paris, his vision of the worse evils behind the turmoil and confusion, and which caused them. Morley says justly, that the Revolution at first was not political, but social; it was an uprising against ancient and intolerable evils; against a social system which left the rich untaxed, and heaped on the poor the whole burden of the State; which held thousands of peasants in the condition of serfs; which made the liberty and prosperity of the masses dependent on the caprice of a monarch or the whim of a monarch's mistress.

The mere chronology of Burke's writings shows how utterly and fatally he was prejudiced on the whole subject of the Revolution. His "Reflections on the French Revolution" were published in October 1790, and 30,000 copies were sold in a few weeks. But at that date the "Reign of Terror" was undreamed of; the September massacres were still two years distant. Robespierre had not yet risen, a sea-green portent on the political horizon, to the terror of mankind; he was but an inconspicuous joint in the Jacobin tail. Louis XVI.'s comfortable dreams were haunted by no vision of an overturned throne and an ever-busy guillotine. An English traveller who saw him at

the Tuileries after the mob had brought the royal family from Versailles, describes him as being "as plump as ease can make him." France was merely in search of a constitution, and had only reached the stage of deciding, in admiring imitation of Great Britain, that its government should take the form of a limited monarchy.

Labouring Time did, indeed, at last overtake Burke's winged invective. The Revolution in its later stages amply justified his vehement and splendid rhetoric. It obeyed, in a word, the law of such movements. It outran the wrongs which at first inspired it, and constituted its moral justification. Fanaticism —especially French fanaticism—soon parts company with reason. The menace of foreign Powers drove Paris frantic with mingled rage and panic. Deep called unto deep. Terror at the frontier kindled outrages at the centre. When the Duke of Brunswick, at the head of the armies of Austria and Prussia, threatened to shoot every member of the National Guard taken in arms, and to blot Paris out of existence if any injury was inflicted on the French royal family, the Paris Sections, in half-insane rage, stormed the Tuileries, massacred the Swiss guard, and the king and queen vanished behind prison doors on their way to the guillotine. There was undoubtedly a relation of cause and effect betwixt the menacing spectre of the Duke of Brunswick on the French frontier, and some of the bloodiest scenes in the Reign of Terror.

But though this explains scenes over which humanity still mourns, it does not justify them: and in 1793 the Revolution deserved all the scorn and hate which, with eloquence so impassioned and stately, Burke had poured upon it in 1790. Robespierre, St. Just, and Barrère were, in fact, all that Burke imagined Mirabeau and the Girondists to be. Taine says that in Paris during the Terror there were thirty-six huge prisons and ninety-six provisional gaols crowded with fast-succeeding garrisons of unhappy prisoners. Taking France as a whole, there were 1200 prisons and 40,000 houses of detention similarly crowded. In Paris, spite of the swiftly plying blade of the guillotine, falling and rising sixty times an hour between its red upright posts, the number of prisoners grew till it reached 7840. This huge company hung, so to speak, suspended betwixt the prison and the guillotine. Then came the September massacres. It is curious to learn that the sums which were paid for these, the most dreadful political murders known to modern history, are still recorded in the municipal archives of Paris as "expenses for rendering the prisons more salubrious!"

And now, not only events, but the public opinion of Great Britain were on Burke's side, and the national conscience arrayed itself definitely and finally against the Revolution.

CHAPTER III

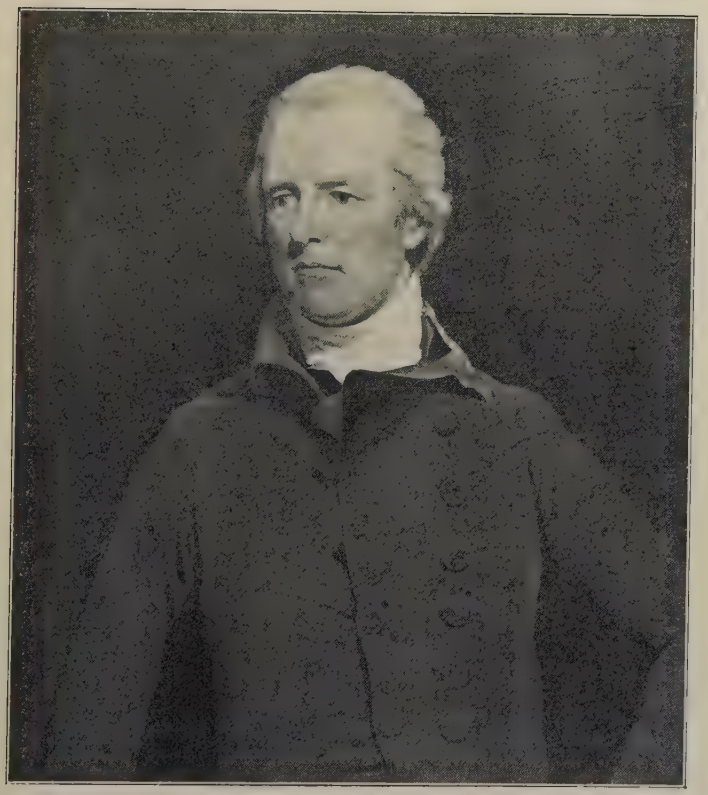
PITT AND FRANCE

WHEN Pitt began his great ministry of seventeen years, he found England still staggering from the disasters of the war of American Independence. In that ill-fated struggle the national debt had been doubled, and the great colonies beyond the Atlantic lost. The arms of England had suffered disgrace on land, and had won scanty honour on the sea. Whole armies had surrendered at Saratoga and at Yorktown. Minorca had been captured, Gibraltar besieged. The children of England beyond the Atlantic had joined with her ancient enemies—with France, and Spain, and Holland—to defeat and humiliate the mother-land. Rodney's great victory and the failure of the siege of Gibraltar arrested the torrent of disaster; but the fortunes of England at the end of 1783 stood lower than they had done for three centuries.

Pitt's task was to nurse the kingdom into convalescence. His genius was essentially practical. He was a peace minister, a great financier, his brain saturated with the hard-headed arithmetical wisdom of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." If his serene

intellect was capable of feeling any thrill of passion, it was a passion for wise reforms and great economies. He might have anticipated Cobden in his Free Trade ideas and Lord Durham in his colonial policy. There was at the moment a deficit of £12,000,000 in the public revenue; the national debt had reached £200,000,000: consols stood at only £60. Bad harvests—a melancholy procession of lean years, haggard as those which defiled through Pharaoh's dreams—stretched in one hungry and desolate line from 1789 till 1802, and these exasperated every existing financial mischief. Office meant for Pitt a golden opportunity of restoring the public finances, of translating great reforms into law, and of rebuilding the broken fortunes of England. It was the magnificent opportunity of his life, and Fate, that so often mocked him, gave him for a moment all his ambition asked—the chance of carrying great measures into effect. He would redress Irish wrongs; he would abolish slavery; he would sweeten the brutal ferocity of English criminal law; he would stamp the Free Trade doctrines he had learnt from Adam Smith on the fiscal system of England; he would extinguish the national debt!

Thus, alike by the liberal bent of his own mind, and by his absorption in beneficent tasks such as these, Pitt was slow to see the perilous form the French Revolution was taking, and reluctant to quarrel with it. He was, in fact, obstinately polite



WILLIAM PITT

From the painting by JOHN HOPPNER, R.A.

to it. War would arrest his reforms and ruin his finances, and never was a British minister more stubbornly pacific. The national temper grew ever more hostile to Revolutionary France, but Pitt contemplated everything that was happening in Paris through rose-coloured spectacles. He would accept no warning, he would resent no insult. The French Government, he said, "was bent on cultivating the most unbounded friendship with Great Britain." "It was difficult at that period," says Lord Rosebery, "to listen to Pitt and believe that there was anything more stirring in the world than the tax on female servants or the subjection of tobacco to excise. . . . Tranquillity was only occasionally interrupted by the sonorous voice of the Minister proclaiming, as from a muezzin's minaret, the continued peace and prosperity of the empire." And this was in 1790, the year of the "Feast of Pikes," when the Revolution, to use Carlyle's phrase, had received its "fire-baptism" in the storming of the Bastille, when the French king was in fact, if not in form, a prisoner in Paris, and French nobles and princes were flying, with fluttering garments and loud shrieks, across the French borders! Green, in his "History of the English People," says, "No hour of Pitt's life was so great as the hour when he stood, lonely and passionless, before the growth of national passion, and refused to bow to the gathering cry for war." Even the September massacres failed to shock and alarm him.

But it is only possible to compliment the stubborn optimism with which Pitt refused to recognise the approach of war with France at the expense of his insight and statesmanship. In February 1792—just twelve months, that is, before the great war began—Pitt reduced his vote for the navy, and told the House of Commons, "unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment!" "The longer I work at politics," said Bismarck, "the less do I believe in human reckoning." And that the greatest Prime Minister England has ever known should predict "fifteen years of peace" when standing on the very edge of twenty years of war, is a circumstance which may well breed a mistrust of political capacity in general.

Pitt, in a word, had the vision not of the seer, but of the practical statesman, a vision clear enough within its range, but with no gleam of prophetic insight; and the new, strange, bewildering force which had arisen might well wreck all prudent forecasts and confound all political expectation.

Meanwhile events moved with breathless speed. In 1792 Louis XVI. made his ill-planned and fatal attempt to flee from France. Austria and Prussia joined in a league to suppress the Revolution, and the Duke of Brunswick gathered his battalions on the Meuse. France was threatened with invasion. Then

came the proclamation of the Republic, the September massacres, the impeachment of the king. Louis XVI. was executed on January 21, 1793. "The coalesced kings of Europe threaten us," said Danton; "we hurl at their feet, as a challenge, the head of a king!" Only a few weeks before the National Convention in Paris had passed its famous Edict of Fraternity, which proclaimed, "All Governments are our enemies, all peoples are our friends." It was a mere appeal to anarchy. The people were invited everywhere to overthrow kings and ministers, and promised the aid of France in that beneficent task.

Revolutionary France was doing now, in a sort of political frenzy, what Napoleon did afterwards under the impulse of personal ambition. It was flinging itself, with torch and sword, in a furious crusade on Europe. It would enforce revolutionary ideas on the sister nations at the point of the bayonet. "Be my brother, or I will kill you," was the revolutionary idea of "fraternity;" its conception of liberty was to enforce its own reading of that strangely-abused term on all its neighbours with the logic of fire and steel. It would establish "freedom," that is, by denying it. It would use the methods of the despot to destroy despotism. "The success of our Government," said St. Just, "means the overthrow of all others." And the Republic practically declared war on all existing Governments.

France, thus, was no longer a nation, but a sect;

a political sect in a lunatic mood of missionary zeal. All treaties with "despots" were declared null in law. "Cannon are our negotiators," said an orator in the Convention; "bayonets and millions of free men our ambassadors." France would not be safe, it was announced, till it was encircled by a girdle of republics baptized at the steaming font of the Revolution. A decree of the Convention, dated December 15, directed that "in all those countries which are or shall be occupied by the armies of the Republic, the generals shall immediately proclaim, in the name of the French people, the abolition of all imposts . . . the sovereignty of the people, and the suppression of all existing authorities." Clause xi. of that wonderful decree declared France would "treat as enemies of the people all who refused or renounced liberty and equality."

The new Republic thus claimed to carry into the realm of international relations the tumult, the ferment, the scorn for vested rights and for ancient habitudes, which marked the Revolution itself. Every European constitution in turn was to be fused in that political furnace, and hammered by French hammers on the anvil of the French Republic to a French pattern. A decree issued three weeks earlier directed that each French commander was to be furnished with a general formula for all the nations of the world—a sort of circular letter, to be delivered, with an accompaniment of drums and cannon-shot,

to the human race. This alarming document began with the words, "The people of France to the people of ——, greeting; we have come to expel your tyrants." The fanaticism of the Revolutionists at the beginning of the great war was thus attempting what the gigantic ambition of Napoleon undertook in its later stages. It would overrun the world!

Revolutionary France applied her principle that all Governments were wicked, and all peoples virtuous and oppressed, to even the United States, at the moment when Washington himself was President. The Government of the United States, the choice of a free Republic, with one of the noblest figures in all history at its head, was in this fashion classed with ancient despotisms as a thing accursed and to be overthrown. It was guilty of the crime of not being French, and of having achieved freedom in a manner unknown in the Place de la Grève!

These decrees of the Convention were not mere verbal flourishes. Fanaticism has an energy all its own, and French fanaticism, it may be added (though it is apt soon to expire in mere ashes), rises quickly to a very alarming temperature. And when the Revolution found a fit vehicle for its terrific energy in the Committee of Public Safety and the Revolutionary Tribunal, a force was generated which menaced every institution in Europe. Robespierre and his Committee of Public Safety,

according to one estimate, sent fourteen armies into the field, and these under generals who were pricked into energy by the threatening edge of the axe. French armies invaded Belgium and seized Antwerp. Savoy was occupied, the Rhine provinces of Germany were invaded, and the Scheldt declared an open river. Both France and England were bound by a long chain of treaties, the latest of which was not yet five years old, to guarantee to Holland the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt and the Meuse. The Convention, however, decreed that the exclusive occupation of navigable rivers was "contrary to the rights of man," and directed its general in Flanders to open the Scheldt, if necessary, by the argument of artillery.

All existing policies and treaties were thus to be reconstructed according to "the rights of man," construed, so to speak, in French terms! England would gladly have left France to wreck and to reconstruct all her institutions according to her own pleasure. It would have treated the Reign of Terror itself as a purely domestic incident. How could a nation which had beheaded Charles I. find a cause of war in the circumstance that France had guillotined Louis XVI.? But Revolutionary France had become a menace to Europe. The House of the Bourbons, with its Family Compact, that had disturbed so long the politics of the world, had vanished; but in its place had arisen a sort of

formless anarchy, more threatening even than it. A nation that had broken up all shapes of government in its own bounds now undertook to cast down all the forms of government possessed by other nations.

War was plainly inevitable. The National Convention declared war with England on February 1; the English declaration of war was issued, with visible reluctance, on February 11, ten days later. And it is a curious proof of the world of distracted dreams in which the French imagination wandered, that, according to French orators, the English people were the unconfessed but ardent allies of France, and only their rulers its enemies! "The free men of England," wrote a French Minister, "will refuse to bear arms against their brethren. We will fly to their succour. We will lodge 50,000 caps of liberty in England, and when we stretch out our arm to these Republicans, the tyranny of their monarchy will be overthrown." And these words were written at a moment when, probably, the man in England who contemplated the approaching war with most of hate and abhorrence was Pitt himself!

So began the greatest war that England has ever waged, a war destined to last, with two brief intervals of half-hearted and uncertain peace, for twenty-two years; a war maintained by England not only with her own fleets and armies, but with mighty coalitions. Pitt and his successors, in fact, constructed with

pathetic industry, and nourished with uncounted English gold, no less than six of these coalitions—that rose like gigantic shadows over Europe and melted like shadows! It was a war which left to the English name a legacy of imperishable glory, but which also extracted from English pockets over £1,400,000,000 in glittering coin,[1] and which arrested for a generation the social and political development of Great Britain! But if ever a war was morally justifiable, it was this. It was a war forced upon England. It was fought for great ends. For England herself it was something more than a struggle for national existence. It was, in its final shape, a struggle for the freedom of the world against a universal military despotism.

The war, it may be added, had great material compensations for England. Gneisenau, the Prussian strategist, when the war was over declared in an amusing passage, "Great Britain is under weightier obligations to no mortal man more than to this very villain [Napoleon]; for by the occurrences whereof he is the author, her greatness, prosperity, and wealth have attained their present elevation." In a sense that is quite true. Other wars have left no visible

[1] Fairburn's "Black Book" gives the following figures:—

Additions to the public debt from 1793 to 1815	£789,537,445
Increase in the unfunded debt	50,494,060
War taxes after deducting expenses of a peace establishment as it stood in 1793 . . .	614,488,459
Total expenses of the French war	£1,427,219,964

trace on the fortunes of Great Britain, or their record is written merely in the catalogue of the slain and in an expanded national debt. But, as one of its unforeseen results, the Great War with France put into the hands of England practically all the colonies, and nearly all the carrying trade, of the world. And the England of to-day has entered into that splendid inheritance. The Napoleonic war thus helped to make possible the far-stretching empire over which at the end of the nineteenth century the British flag flies.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPPOSING POWERS

THE story of the struggle betwixt France—the France of the Revolution and of the Empire—and England may be prefaced by some comparison of these Powers as they confronted each other at the beginning of the contest.

In scale of population, of course, France far exceeded England. Its population in 1793 was not less than 25,000,000, that of Great Britain at the same period did not exceed 15,000,000. Later in the struggle Napoleon was able to recruit his armies over two-thirds of Europe. In military force, again, the advantage was wholly on the side of France. The regular troops of England when the war broke out did not exceed 30,000, while France had 500,000 men under arms. Under the pressure of war, of course, the British army expanded to great dimensions. Thus in 1809 there were 700,000 soldiers serving under the British flag, a motley host, many-tongued and many-coloured, and scattered over two-thirds of the globe. But in France, on the other hand, the nation was practically transformed into an

army. Every other channel of national energy save that of war was closed. The Committee of Public Safety sent fourteen armies into the field. Napoleon during the two years between 1811–13 collected into his battalions from France alone 1,100,000 conscripts. France thus always kept an enormous preponderance in military strength.

At the outset the armies of both nations were, from a military point of view, in a very unsoldierly state. The French troops in the early stages of the Revolution were ill-armed, ill-clothed, ill-led, insubordinate, fermenting with ideas of "liberty" which acted as a mischievous solvent to discipline. An effective army cannot be constructed on the principles of a public meeting, especially of a French public meeting. As one application of the new doctrine of "equality" to military affairs, a decree of the Convention directed that the men of the National Guard should elect their own officers, and this often made a stentorian voice and a venomous tongue qualifications for military command. It is curious to remember, however, that these commissions conferred by a plebiscite of the ranks gave many fine soldiers to France — Oudinot, Victor, Lannes, Massena — whom Wellington declared to have the best military head of all Napoleon's generals —Suchet, Pichegru, and Marceau. But war is a rough test of political theories, and within two years the plan of allowing the men to elect their own

officers was abandoned. Moreover, the soundest views on "liberty" and "equality" will not make up for the lack of boots and bayonets, of gunpowder and of artillery, of the habit of discipline, and of the faculty of leadership; and the early Republican armies, though capable of spasms of furious valour, were perhaps the most uncertain and extraordinary troops ever set in line of battle.

France was much weaker on the sea than England, yet its forces were by no means to be despised. James, in his "Naval History," as the result of an elaborate comparison betwixt the fleets of England and France, shows that, taking line-of-battle ships only, the forces of the two nations stood thus:—

Ships.	No. of Ships.	No. of Guns.	Aggregate Broadside Weight.
British line	115	8718	88,957
French line	76	6002	73,957

The British superiority, as shown by these figures, is great, but by no means overwhelming; and later, when the fleets of Holland and of Spain were added to those of France, that superiority—as measured by numbers at least—wholly vanished. The French ships were, as a rule, finer models and faster sailers than the British. But in seamanship, in fighting energy, in the impulse to attack, and in the confident expectation of victory, the British far exceeded their rivals.

It is, moreover, impossible to navigate or fight a

ship on the principles of a republic; and the French navy, if it caught a new fighting energy from the Revolution, suffered sadly from its effects in discipline. At Toulon, at Havre, at Cherbourg, at Rochefort—at nearly all the French ports, in fact—the sailors proceeded with surprising results to temper naval discipline with the principles of "fraternity" and of "the rights of man."

The Naval Committee of the French Assembly, in October 1793, directed that the fleet should be purged of all officers "suspected of incivism"—who did not possess politics, that is, of a sufficiently lurid complexion; though Villaret Joyeuse warned them that "patriotism alone cannot handle a ship." Correct opinions, of course, brought swift promotion. Thus the three French admirals who led the French line of battle in the great fight of June 1, 1794, had been only lieutenants in 1791. The trained "seamen-gunners" were abolished by a decree of the Assembly as "an offence to the principles of equality." To be guilty of possessing special skill was a crime that carried with it a flavour of "aristocracy," not to say of "incivism." This step perhaps improved, from the Revolutionary point of view, the politics of the fleet, but it imparted a villainous quality to its shooting.

Citizen Jean Bon Saint-Andre, who represented the National Assembly in naval affairs, exhorted the fleet to substitute "audacity" for all the frivolities of naval

skill. They must "disdain skilful evolutions," he told them, "and try those boarding actions in which the Frenchman is always conqueror, and so astonish Europe by new prodigies of valour." Citizen Jean Bon Saint-Andre, it is to be noted, was applying his own principle of "audacity" to history. Even Napoleon, later on, thought that all that was needed to conquer at sea was a sufficient supply of courage. "The English," he told his Minister of Marine, Decres, "will become very small when France has two or three admirals willing to die." A sufficient number of French admirals did die, or were taken prisoners, and yet those pestilent English, somehow, declined to become any "smaller" as a result!

Perhaps the most expressive and amusing example of the new temper in the French navy is supplied by the mutiny at Quiberon, where a deputation of seamen, headed by two midshipmen, interviewed the admiral, De Galles, and required him, in peremptory accents, to return to Brest. The imagination fails to picture what would happen if two youthful midshipmen headed a deputation from the forecastle to a British admiral, and dictated how he should manage his fleet! In the Quiberon case, however, the admiral, with many French expletives, at last obeyed the midshipmen! When the forecastle dictates the strategy of the quarter-deck, disaster is not far off. The French Assembly, it may be added, showed itself more anxious to

supply its fleets with correct political principles than with warm clothes, good rations, and abundant gunpowder. In 1801 Admiral Gantheaume reported that his crews were "in a frightful condition, naked or covered with rags, badly fed, unpaid for fifteen months, discouraged, and dying of scurvy."

There were mutinies, too, in the British fleets of that period, but with the exception, perhaps, of the abortive mutiny before Cadiz in Jervis' fleet, they sprang, not from a political root, but from Jack's natural prejudice in favour of decent food, reasonable pay, and fair treatment. And the characteristic British respect for law runs oddly, like a thread of gold, through the dark web of the British mutinies. In Paris the theatres were open during the Reign of Terror; in England the judges went their regular circuits through the great Rebellion; and those two facts express the difference betwixt French and English character. In the mutinies of the English fleet at Spithead, at the Nore, and off Toulon, there are abundant proofs of how deeply the English feeling for law, duty, and discipline kept its hold on the seamen. They qualified their refusal to weigh anchor by the condition "unless the enemy's fleet should put to sea," and they punished with rough vigour those of their own party who were guilty of disorder. England emerged from the great war with an absolute command of

the sea; but this was not due merely to the accident that Nelson led her fleets and St. Vincent and Barham shaped her strategy; nor yet to the fact that her sailors were hardier and more expert than those of France. Her superiority of moral temper and fibre, of respect for discipline and of capacity for obedience, helps to explain why the Union Jack swept the Tricolour from the seas.

The Revolution, however, gave to France many compensations. New elements of moral strength were created. The nation was lifted up to a mood of passion, a passion bred of new ideas, of liberty new won, of strange forces suddenly emancipated; and her veins were flushed with the strength that passion gives. A flame of national spirit was kindled such as the French people had never before known, and never since. The earlier Revolutionary campaigns, at least, were a crusade of ideas rather than a mere contest of muskets and bayonets; and the infection of these ideas spread with the viewless but unresting march of a pestilence.

Except at the point where its frontiers touched Spain, round Revolutionary France, now on flame with new ideas, was a zone of petty and artificial states, resembling so much parched and worthless rubbish, ready to be consumed. The Europe of the Revolutionary era was, in a sense, the ancient distracted British Heptarchy writ large. Italy was a bundle of independent principalities and kingdoms,

Switzerland, with a population less than half that of modern London, contrived to support on its hill-slopes no less than twenty-two microscopic Republics. In Germany there were nearly 300 political entities, of different degrees of independence—kings of all dimensions, electors, princes of the sword and princes of the crozier, free towns, &c.; and above this phantom-dance of kinglets and princelets rose a shadow of the ancient Cæsars—a very thin and wavering shadow—in the person of the Emperor. In such a mote-dance of royalties, principalities, and dukedoms, there was, of course, no patriotism, no sense of national existence, no pulse of genuine national life. It was so much political dry wood ready for the fire. On these artificial states, destitute of true national existence, the ideas of the Revolution acted as a resistless solvent. So the Republican armies found allies everywhere.

The Revolution, again, in the hour at once of its fiercest passion and of its utmost peril, discovered an instrument of government of terrific energy. In March 1793 the Committee of Public Safety first becomes visible. It consisted of twenty-four members, charged with the general control of national affairs. The Committee quickly shrank in size and expanded enormously in authority. It was reduced to nine members, who divided the various departments of government amongst themselves. A decree signed by any three of them had the force of

law. All the energy of the Revolution was concentrated in this Committee, and spoke and acted through it; and this terrible body was re-duplicated all over France. In each of its 21,000 communes rose a tiny reflex of the central Committee at Paris. There was a Committee of twelve, a Club, a Tribunal: the Club was the village parliament, the Committee its executive, the Tribunal its judiciary, with absolute powers of life and death. The nation thus tingled with revolutionary energy in every fibre.

No other despotism known to history was quite like that of the Committee of Public Safety. It was the despotism not of a Cæsar, a single human will, but of a set of ideas—of ideas fused to flame and embodied in a cluster of fanatics. All the resources of France were at its absolute disposal. The nation became a camp. Every adult Frenchman was turned into a soldier. The Committee organised and sent out a procession of armies, often bare-foot and ragged, always half-drilled and half-armed—mere mobs with weapons. And yet these half-clad, half-armed, ill-fed, undisciplined battalions of the Revolution turned out to possess terrible fighting qualities. Their vehemence swept away like chaff the battalions of Prussians and Austrians opposed to them—armies, to quote Mitchell, "of well-powdered and well-buttoned soldiers, taken mostly from the refuse of the German population, ruled by a cruel and de-

grading system of discipline; three-halfpence a day, without the slightest prospect of ever improving their condition, being their brightest incentive to meet wounds, death, and mutilation."

The fierce energy of the Committee of Public Safety, again, made French strategy electrical. French generals were required to win victories if they would save their own heads. Commissioners of the Assembly, specially appointed by the Committee of Public Safety, were present with the staff of each army, and superintended its operations. They watched with suspicious eyes the tactics of each unhappy French general, and radiated a sort of fiery energy into his military operations. St. Just, for example, on joining the army of the Rhine, found 10,000 men without shoes. He made the municipality of Strasburg provide them by ten o'clock the next morning! The Republic had not yet, it is true, the unmatched military genius of Napoleon at its service, nor could it, in its earlier stages, draw its resources from the whole area of subjugated Europe. But when Carnot joined the Committee of Public Safety, the Revolution had as its instrument a military brain of the first quality. If he did not exactly "organise victory," he gave method, unity, and intelligence to the French armies; and these are the essential conditions of victory.

The standard of discipline rose. The men grew war-hardened. The regiments were tempered in

the furnace of battle itself, and became fighting instruments of great power. So the distracted forces of the Republic grew into those terrible armies which, under Napoleon, entered as conquerors almost every capital of Europe in turn.

Of the British forces of that period it is difficult to give a faithful account which will sound credible in modern ears. The troops, for example, which the Duke of York led to Holland had, of course, the inalienable fighting quality of their race; they yielded, indeed, some examples of valour worthy of the best traditions of the British army. But they consisted, for the most part, of old men too feeble to march, or of boys scarcely able to carry their muskets. Sir Henry Calvert, who was aide-de-camp to the Duke of York in Holland, says of some newly-landed battalions, "they much resembled Falstaff's men, and were as lightly clad as any Carmagnole battalion." Whole regiments, Bunbury records, were unable to march to the front on account of physical infirmities. In that ill-fated army there was neither system nor discipline. It not only "swore terribly," it drank furiously. The officers were untrained, the men only half-drilled. Soldiership in its modern sense—precise, scientific, business-like, with its exact calculations, its far-reaching combinations, its care for the soldier, for his health, his food, his comfort—was, in the early days of the great war, an art which had never been discovered, or else had perished.

Commissions in those easy-going days were granted as a favour, sometimes to mere infants, or to lads who drew pay as officers while they were being caned as schoolboys. A Scotch story, quoted by Alison, runs that when a loud noise was heard in the nursery of a Scottish family of rank, the nurse explained, "It is only the Major roaring for his parritch." The commissariat might almost be said to be non-existent; military hospitals were not yet invented. Generalship was forgotten. And the Duke of York was the fitting head of an army so wonderful. He had the choleric, red-faced, fighting courage of his house; but, to quote an angry critic of the period, "his stupidity as a man was only equalled by his ignorance as a general." Wellington, who served in the campaign of 1793, used to declare afterwards that it was a marvel to him how any of the English escaped. In that one campaign the army of the Duke of York lost 18,596 men, most of them killed by mere neglect and ill-management.

It seemed, indeed, as if, in the higher branches of the army, the very art of war had perished. Courage was the one military virtue which survived, but it was uninstructed and undisciplined; and amongst the generals who led British troops on one disastrous expedition after another, no gleam of leadership, no faculty for organisation—scarcely even a spark of common sense—is discoverable. The British general of the period, according to Lord Grenville, was merely

"an old woman in a red ribbon." Lord North, on looking over a list of officers submitted to him for commands in America, said, "I don't know what effect these names may have on the enemy, but I know they make me tremble!" And it was officers of this type that led English troops in the first engagements of the great war.

It remains to be added that, in the early years of the war at least, the mood of British opinion towards the army was careless, and even semi-contemptuous, in a very curious degree. Great Britain, it might almost be said, expected nothing from its army. It was indifferent to its failures. It was content to see it wasted on a hundred meaningless and inglorious expeditions. About its fleet the British public had a proud and jealous sensitiveness which made failure intolerable. The loss of a couple of seventy-fours would almost have shaken the Cabinet to its fall. Byng was shot on his own quarter-deck for his very mild failure off Minorca. Calder, with fifteen ships, met Villeneuve with twenty-four, and was court-martialled and censured for capturing only two of the enemy's vessels, and for not having prevented the junction of the French and Spanish fleets! A British admiral who returned without his fleet would probably have shared Byng's fate. But British generals returned from one inglorious expedition after another with wrecked forces and lost credit, and the stolid British public con-

templated the spectacle with entire indifference. The Duke of York came back from Holland, the Earl of Chatham from the Walcheren fiasco, Fraser from Egypt; and the circumstance that they had failed, and failed badly, did no particular injury to their credit. Nobody really expected them to succeed! The whole tragedy of the Walcheren disaster, which cost England over 7000 gallant lives and millions in gold, caused less excitement in England than the flash of angry pistol-shot which Canning and Castlereagh expended on each other as an incidental result of the expedition.

On the sea, the Englishman of that day expected to do his fighting in his own proper person. On the land, he hired other nations to fight, and did not even trouble himself enough on the subject to see that the foreign Powers who took his money carried out his instructions. Abercromby's expedition to Egypt was a very soldierly bit of work; Moore's campaign, if tragical, was certainly not inglorious; but with these exceptions, the whole military history of the war, until Wellington stepped on to the great stage of the Peninsula, was made up, as far as England was concerned, of idiotic expeditions in which a little army was despatched to make a raid somewhere, for no particular reason, and with instructions to hurry back as soon as things looked serious.

Yet the cost in life and treasure of these petty

expeditions was amazing. The return of soldiers killed or dead in service for 1793 was 18,596. In 1795–96 over 40,000 soldiers were discharged, invalided, on account of wounds or infirmity, a result chiefly of the fatal West Indian expedition of that year. In 1799 the absurd Duke of York in the absurd Holland expedition lost 10,000 men in five engagements. Up to the Peace of Luneville British arms had achieved absolutely nothing on land, even at this enormous expenditure of life, while the National Debt had grown from £250,000,000 to £574,000,000.

The Peninsula and Waterloo, of course, represent a quite different policy; but even then, when Europe was shaking to the tread of armies whose aggregate numbers rose to 2,000,000, Great Britain never arrayed 50,000 of her own troops under the flag of one of her own generals. She was content to be an auxiliary where she ought to have been a principal. That policy and mood, of course, reacted unfavourably on the army itself. When Great Britain planned a great strategy for her soldiers, and expected great achievements from them, her army showed itself as capable of heroic deeds as her navy. But for the first fifteen years of the war Great Britain practically expected nothing from her soldiers, and got what she expected —the fiasco in Holland, the Walcheren lunacy, the idle victory at Maida, the ignoble raid on

Buenos Ayres, or Fraser's childish performance in Egypt.

But the British, if not a military, are a martial race. The essential qualities of soldiership, hardihood, energy, the long-enduring courage that refuses to know defeat, the cool and stubborn endurance that outwears and outlasts the fiery valour of other races—all these, in amplest measure, belonged to the English troops of that day. And though the English forces to the end of the great struggle suffered from administrative weakness in the War Office, by degrees there emerged the armies that fought their way through the Peninsula, and finally overthrew the strength of Napoleon at Waterloo—soldiers, in the words of their great Captain, "fit to go anywhere and do anything." In the later stages of the conflict, too, a soldier took the leadership of the armies of England worthy to stand amongst the great commanders of all time. Under Wellington, and leaders trained in the school of Wellington, the fame of the English land forces rivalled that of English fleets. Not Trafalgar itself is a name more memorable than Waterloo!

The British navy, like the British army, had its defects. For how much influence, and not merit or service, was allowed to count in promotion may be judged from the single fact that Lord Rodney promoted his son from the rank of midshipman to that of post-captain in the course of a single month, and when

the boy was only fifteen years and five months old! The conditions of the service were necessarily hard in that age of long blockades and imperfect sanitary knowledge, when more sailors perished of scurvy than died in battle. The captain of a man-of-war is necessarily a despot, and despotism easily darkens into tyranny. The terrible mutinies of that period at Spithead, at the Nore, and in the North Sea—the story of Bligh's ship and of the loss of the *Hermione* —are proofs of the cruel conditions of the naval service at the beginning of the great war.

But war purified the navy. Its traditions grew more humane, its administration wiser, while in energy, seamanship, hardihood, and resource the British sailors of that period are unsurpassed in the naval history of all times. Mahan says that Nelson—"the one man who summed up and embodied in himself the greatness of the possibilities which sea-power comprehends"—is the man for whom genius and opportunity worked together to make him "the personification of the navy of Great Britain." And a navy which found not merely its foremost leader, but its most perfect representative, in Nelson must have had magnificent qualities!

Great Britain, when the great war opened, was not rich in statesmanship; it suffered through the whole course of the war, indeed, from a certain tragical lack of administrative ability on the part of its public men. The hour was great; but, for the most part,

the men were small! Pitt himself was essentially a great peace Minister; he lacked the special gifts—the haughty combative pride, the infectious daring, the faculty for far-stretching organisation, the gift for selecting fit instruments—which made his father the most famous War Minister the Empire has known. "No man," said a soldier of Chatham's day, "ever entered Mr. Pitt's closet who did not come out a braver man than when he went in." He was rich in the magic of genius; and in Trevelyan's words, could make admiring England believe all he asserted, pay all he demanded, undertake everything he advised, and remember only what he chose. But this was the elder Pitt! How it would have doubled the resources of England throughout her struggle with the French Revolution if, instead of the unspeakable Addington —"narrow, low-minded, and selfish," to quote Cornewall Lewis—the prim and inert Perceval, the obese and drowsy-brained Liverpool, Chatham—Chatham *minus* his gout—with his masterful intellect, his fierce energy, his haughty faith in his own race, and his genius for far-reaching combinations, had directed the armies and fleets of England!

Still, in the younger Pitt England had a great Minister, with patriotism as stainless and pride as lofty, if not quite so loudly vocal, as even that of Chatham. Pitt's task in guarding, not merely the national life of England, but the freedom and civilisation of Europe, against the destructive forces of the

Revolution, was no doubt too great for his powers; but this is hardly a reproach to him. As Lord Rosebery puts it, he had to "struggle with something superhuman, immeasurable, incalculable. We do not read that the wisest and the mightest in Egypt were able to avail when the light turned to darkness and the rivers to blood." Nevertheless, Pitt brought to the service of England magnificent gifts. It was not merely that he had a genius for finance, a piercing insight into social conditions and forces, an ordered and tireless industry that made him a great civil administrator. He had an heroic standard of duty; a courage that fear could not shake; a clear and lofty patriotism, which made him the noblest Englishman of his day and the fittest representative of all that is best in the English character. England found, indeed, in the stately figure, the haughty endurance, the proud and solitary spirit of Pitt, the fittest symbol of the national fortunes.

Pitt had been for nearly ten years Prime Minister of England when the Twenty Years' War began. They had been ten golden years, years of peace, marked by the birth of great industries, by a marvellous increase in the volume of trade, and an equally marvellous growth of the national wealth. Great Britain had become the workshop of the world. The American colonies were lost, but the trade with them was greater than before they gained their

independence. Consols stood at 60 just before Pitt assumed office; in five years they had risen to par. The very war itself, in one sense, fed the national wealth; for, as its area widened, the commercial rivals of England were swept from the sea, and the carrying trade of the world fell more and more under the English flag. The patriotism and wealth of the nation enabled it to bear taxation on an heroic scale, a scale which, in these easy modern times, seems well-nigh incredible. Pitt's income-tax was 2s. in the pound on all incomes over £200 a year; and the whole scale of taxation—minute and far-stretching—was in the same ratio. In 1798 Pitt trebled at a stroke the assessed taxes of the previous year; the same year he invited voluntary gifts towards the public expenses, and £2,000,000 was promptly subscribed! In 1802 it was calculated that the charges of the public debt and of the public service absorbed 6s. 8d. in the pound of every citizen's income. How great must have been the patriotism, how exhaustless the courage, of the nation which endured, for a period so long, such burdens!

It was another source of strength for England that, under the stress of a great conflict with external perils, party divisions, for a while at least, grew faint. The new Toryism of Pitt embodied many Whig virtues; but in what was felt to be a struggle with anarchic forces, a struggle for national existence, and for the cause of free civilisation throughout

Europe, even those who were politically opposed to the Minister rallied to his side, as being the representative of order and of the national safety. So the whole Whig party for a while crumbled into mere ruin, and the ablest section of it, under the Duke of Portland, joined Pitt.

Great Britain, again, was invigorated by the great religious movement of which Wesley and Whitfield were the leaders. That movement was practically a new birth of Puritanism, but of Puritanism spiritualised and ennobled, purged of its gloom, of its fierce political leaven, of its narrowness. It is not easy to realise how it might have affected English history if, in the middle of the eighteenth century, with its drowsy Church, its enervated morals, its laxity of public life, there had arisen, instead of a reformer like Wesley, an English Voltaire, distilling the gall of his scepticism, the acid of his bitter wit, into the life of England. In that case the Reign of Terror in Paris might have been rivalled by one as fierce and as bloody in London! Wesley, to the zeal of an apostle and the spiritual ardours of a saint, added the patriotism of an Englishman, and something, at least, of the intellectual vision of a statesman. And he did something more than crystallise into happy and enduring form the great religious body which bears his name. He affected for good the whole tone of English society. The religious revival of that period had the office of a healthful salt in the

national blood. It purified domestic life. It wove bonds of quick and generous sympathy betwixt all classes. It put a more robust fibre into the national character. It gave a new tenderness to charity, a nobler daring to philanthropy, a loftier authority to morals, as well as a new grace to religion. So it helped to cleanse the national life. Amongst the elements of strength to Great Britain at the beginning of the struggle with Revolutionary France, is surely to be reckoned the invigoration bred of a revived faith in religion.

"The strength of Rome," says Ruskin, "was the eternal strength of the world—pure family life, sustained by agriculture and defended by simple and fearless manhood." That sentence not unfitly describes the strength of England at that critical moment in its history, when it had to grapple with the forces of the Revolution. Its equipment for that great struggle is not to be measured by the scale of its fleets, the coins in its treasury, or the number of bayonets that gleamed beneath its flag. It was strong in the stubborn courage of its people, in the practical unanimity of the national sentiment, and in the fact that, speaking broadly, the national conscience was behind the policy of its statesmen, the march of its armies, the thunders of its fleets.

CHAPTER V

THE ARMY IN FLANDERS

ENGLAND realised but imperfectly the scale of the great contest upon which it was entering. "It will be a short war," said Pitt, "and certainly end in one or two campaigns." "No," said Burke, "it will be a long war and a dangerous war; but it must be undertaken." And Burke's imagination in this matter was wiser than the colder statesmanship of Pitt.

The part taken by England in the war during this, its first period, can hardly be called very heroic, and was certainly not very shiningly successful. English gold counted for more than English gunpowder and bayonets—Pitt began, that is, his system of great coalitions. The Continental Powers had men, England had money, and Pitt's policy was to form one great league after another, to which Great Britain stood in the relation of a profuse and generous paymaster. There was some justification in reason for Pitt's phantom-like coalitions. England's true field was the sea; her great inheritance was the commerce of the world. Within the zone of the encompassing sea she was beyond the reach of the sword even of a

Napoleon. The Continental Powers, on the other hand, had no commerce and little cash; but they were rich in men. They were, moreover, under the very stroke of Napoleon's sword. It seemed a rational division of labour that, as England did the fighting on the sea, they should do the fighting on the land, aided generously by English gold. England herself in the early stages of the conflict, it may be added, did not in the least realise her own military strength. But Pitt, as Lord Rosebery puts it, "was heading a crusade with an army of camp-followers." The allies he purchased had neither convictions nor loyalty. "They took his money and laughed in their sleeve." No less than six of such coalitions were created by British diplomacy and cemented by British gold in the course of the war, and each in turn dissolved in mere ruin.

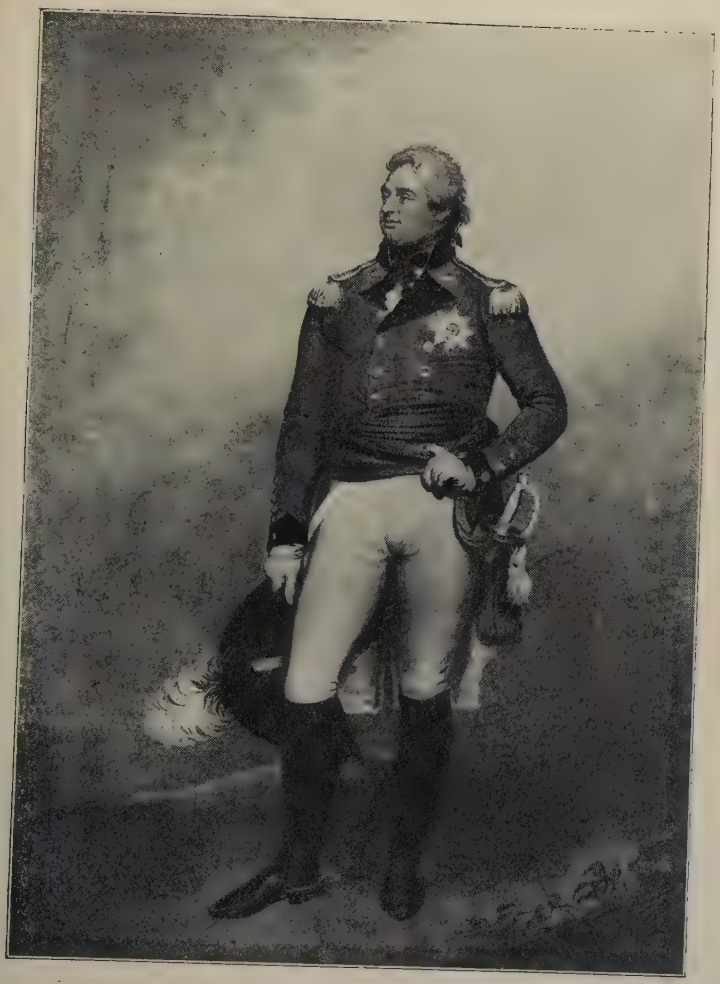
On its naval side, Pitt's policy consisted in blockading French ports, snapping up French colonies, and sweeping the French trade from the sea—a policy carried out with great success, though the colonies captured by the fleets of Great Britain were usually surrendered, as each peace in turn was made, by her diplomatists. On its military side, Great Britain, during the early years of the war, can scarcely be said to have had a policy. The soldiers of Great Britain were wasted in a hundred scattered and meaningless expeditions, that were begun without rational purpose and ended without credit. These

sporadic expeditions, it is calculated, had up to the Peace of Amiens alone cost Great Britain 1350 officers and 60,000 men.

England's contribution to the war in this, its first period, consists of the part taken by the forces under the Duke of York in the campaign in the Low Countries, the attempt to hold Toulon and Corsica, the great sea-fight of the First of June, and the capture of a few colonies.

Of the campaigns in Flanders and Holland in 1793-94 little need be said here. The human memory gladly disburdens itself of records so ignoble. The allies had undertaken to arrest the wild rush of Revolutionary France on Europe, and to restore the old order in France. They failed when success was apparently in their grasp; and they failed, not because their forces were inadequate, but because their purposes were divided and their motives selfish. Their greed, in a word, defeated their own policy.

The forces they put on foot were on a great scale. By the middle of 1793, for example, there were some 365,000 troops arrayed against the Republic. From Bayonne to Calais—north and east and south—the enemies of France were pressing fiercely upon her. The French forces were defeated at Maestricht, at Liège, at Neerwinden. The half-conquered Netherlands were abandoned by the French armies. The Prussians crossed the Rhine. Mayence was besieged and taken, the entrenched camp at Famars was



DUKE OF YORK

From a mezzotint after a portrait by Sir William Beechey, R.A.

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stormed, Conde and Valenciennès were captured. The Republican forces, driven back in confusion by Prince Coburg, retreated behind the Scarp, the light troops of the Allies pushed forward as far as Peronne. France, in brief, was girdled with hostile fires from Basle to Dunkirk; her frontier fortresses were in the hands of her enemies; a great army, 130,000 strong, was within 160 miles of Paris, with no force in its path capable of resisting it. La Vendée, too, was in flames. Lyons and Marseilles had revolted. Toulon had surrendered to the English. At that moment, beyond doubt, the Allies could have crushed the Revolution and replaced the Bourbons on the French throne, though whether they could have maintained them there may be doubted.

Yet the campaign ended in disastrous failure, a fact due to the fatal discords which arose amongst the Allies themselves. Sometimes these discords were bred of selfishness, sometimes of mere muddle-headed stupidity. Thus the Duke of York, who had seen no service, declined to serve under General Clairfait, who had seen much, and to settle the difficulty and satisfy etiquette, the Emperor of Austria, who had seen absolutely none, took command in person! As the wits of the period put it, one incompetent prince, who knew little, was thus to be commanded by another incompetent prince who knew nothing, about war.

The allied monarchs, again, were looking less to

Paris, where anarchy reigned, than to Poland, where booty was to be had, and where Russia had already begun the process of absorption. The temporary disappearance of France from the circle of the Great Powers made that operation possible, and the pre-occupation of Austria and Prussia in the war with the Republic threatened to leave them out of the feast. It seemed to the statesmen of Austria and Prussia, too, that they could not only "save" France, but make the operation a profitable one to themselves by annexing some of its provinces. So when Valenciennes and Conde were captured, Prince Coburg took possession of them in the name of Austria. This roused the alarmed jealousies of Prussia, and set the French emigrants shrieking with patriotic indignation. When these two great towns, part of the ancient monarchy of France, were thus taken possession of, not in the name of Louis XVII., but of the Emperor of Austria, it was plain that the war being waged against France was one of selfish conquest. Behind the Austrian, Prussian, and English bayonets was not the image of a restored monarchy, but the spectre of a dismembered France.

England, too, or rather its statesmen, shared in the conspiracy of selfishness which at this moment divided the counsels and shattered the strength of the Allies. Dunkirk, won with the sword by Oliver Cromwell in 1658, and ignobly sold for French gold by Charles II. in 1662, must be seized. It was the

great naval arsenal from which France threatened the Channel. So at the moment when the frontier fortresses of France had been captured, its armies overthrown, its strength broken by provincial revolt, and its capital lay practically helpless under the stroke of the Allies, the great military league which threatened the Revolution dissolved into a cluster of separate and selfish expeditions—mere freebooting adventures in disguise, but on a great scale. The Duke of York, with 35,000 men, marched north to besiege Dunkirk; the Austrian forces undertook the capture of Quesnoy, and the Prussians withdrew in sullen jealousy from the conflict.

For that ignoble lapse into self-seeking the Allies paid in after years a bitter price. There is a moral providence in history; and the scenes of after years —Moscow in flames, and the French troops marching in triumph through the streets of Vienna and Berlin —may be regarded as part, at least, of the penalty the Great Powers of Europe paid for the theft of Poland. What a cost in gold and in blood England, too, might have escaped, had she been steadfastly loyal to an unselfish purpose in the opening stages of this great conflict!

Another cause contributing to the defeat of the Allies was the terrific energy shown by France: an energy to which the diversion of the Allied forces to independent and selfish objects gave all it wanted —a moment's breathing-space. The Austrian flag

fluttering above the ramparts of Valenciennes was a signal to all France that it was threatened with dismemberment. The war thus became, for every good Frenchman, not a wild attempt to thrust the Revolution on an unwilling Europe, but a struggle for national existence. The arrest of the ordinary industries of life caused by the Revolution poured all the streams of national energy into the channel of war. The Committee of Public Safety, too, acted with ruthless and vehement energy. All France was declared to be in a state of siege. The Republic was turned into a vast camp; a levy of 1,200,000 troops was ordered. The sixty commissioners despatched by the Committee of Public Safety to represent the Convention at the headquarters of the various French armies did not probably improve French strategy, but they at least imparted a breathless speed to French operations. The unfortunate French generals were forbidden to employ orthodox but too loitering tactics; their only choice lay betwixt victory and the guillotine. The Revolution by this time, it may be added, was developing a high degree of military talent—Carnot at the Ministry of War, Jourdan and Pichegru and Hoche in the field.

As a result, the revolt in La Vendée was quenched in blood; Lyons was captured, and a decree of the Convention directed its very name to be suppressed; Toulon was wrested from the English; the siege of

Dunkirk was raised; the Rhine provinces were torn from Austria; Holland and the Netherlands were overrun. Those who contemplate Paris merely, at this stage of the conflict, will see in it nothing but the darkest hour of the Reign of Terror; a nation apparently gone lunatic in mingled panic and hate, with all institutions overthrown, religion suppressed, Robespierre supreme, the guillotine busy. But there must not be forgotten the strange and terrible energy which, at that moment, France was showing against her own revolted provinces at home, and against her enemies in the field.

The part the British took in these disastrous campaigns may be briefly told. The three battalions of the Guards we saw marching to Greenwich on February 25—the 1st and 3rd and the Coldstreams —were destined to relieve Williamstadt, then besieged by the French. A brigade under the command of Sir Ralph Abercromby, consisting of the 14th, 37th, and 53rd, sailed from Leith on March 21 to join the Guards; but of these three regiments, two were completely unfit for service, and could not be taken to the front. Other regiments followed, and finally the Duke of York had under his command 20,000 troops. These were merely a contingent to the Austrian and Prussian forces, and suffered from all the faults of incompetent generalship and divided purposes which wrecked the whole campaign. All history, too, shows that the position of mere auxiliaries to

foreign troops is one in which no special glory has ever been won by the British arms.

That the fighting courage native to their blood did not fail the British, a hundred facts prove. Thus at Vicogne on May 7, when the Prussians and Austrians had thrice assaulted, and in vain, the strong position held by the French, and had lost 1700 men in their assaults, General Knobelsdorf, who commanded the Prussians, rode up to the steady lines of the Coldstreams, who had just reached the field, and told them that "he committed the special glory of driving the French from their entrenchments to the English Guards." The Coldstreams moved steadily forward, crossed a narrow bridge commanded at pistol-shot distance by a strong battery, the two leading companies losing half their numbers in the process. But the Guards never faltered. They wheeled into line as they crossed the rude bridge, and carried the French position with a rush, losing many men in the fierce and bloody struggle. Sir Henry Calvert, then on the Duke of York's staff, visited the scene of the action afterwards, and describes how the gallant Coldstreams were scourged by musketry fire in front and smitten with grape on the flank, and expresses his "wonder" that any troops could maintain their order and dash under such conditions.

The three regiments of the Guards still carry "Lincelles" on their colours in memory of their

steadiness and daring on August 18, when, under General Lake, they carried a heavily armed redoubt held by a greatly superior force of the enemy. The story of the charge of the 15th Hussars, again, at Villers-en-Cauchies, on April 24, 1794, is one of the classic incidents of British military history. Two squadrons of the 15th, under Major Aylett, with two squadrons of Austrian hussars, had been sent forward to reconnoitre. At seven in the morning the four squadrons, numbering a little over 400 men and officers, came upon a body of the enemy's cavalry, 800 strong, in an open forest near Montrecourt. The French retired, the English and Austrian hussars boldly followed them, till suddenly, on reaching the summit of a gentle ridge, they found themselves in the presence of an entire division of the enemy. In a dramatic fashion, which we may guess was suggested by the Austrian rather than the British leader, the little band of hussars, Germans and Englishmen, swore on crossed swords to ride home; then the four tiny squadrons were launched in charge.

The 15th rode home on the enemy's front, the German hussars swept round in a curve to smite their flank. The enemy's cavalry opened to right and left to uncover their artillery, but before the operation, executed with pedantic slowness, was complete the British were upon the French squadrons. The guns opened fire hurriedly, and slew more French

than English. Behind the artillery were drawn up six battalions of infantry in solid oblong formation, the front ranks kneeling; and on this huge mass, with gleaming sabres and galloping hoofs, the hussars launched themselves. The French infantry could not stand the shock; the great square melted into a tumult of flying units, amongst whom the pursuing cavalry rode fiercely, slaying at will. On the Bonchain road, diverging at an angle from the route along which the broken French infantry was flying, was a long line of fifty guns and ammunition waggons. The 15th swung off on to this, and raced along the whole line, slaying horses and drivers and disabling the guns. The pursuit was pressed for six miles, until the sullen roar of guns from the fortress of Bonchain warned the British to retire.

These four gallant squadrons left 1200 French slain and wounded—three times, that is, their own number—on the road betwixt Saulzoir and Villers-en-Cauchies. The Emperor presented to each of the seven surviving officers of the 15th a gold medal, specially struck in honour of that exploit, and a cross of the order of Maria Theresa, carrying with it the rank of baron of the Empire. Pichegru, on the other hand, shot a number of his artillery drivers for their conduct when the men of the 15th charged their guns.

Sir Robert Wilson was then a cornet in the 15th, and actually rode in this furious charge, of which

he has left a very graphic description. "When we began to trot," he says, "the French cavalry made a movement to right and left from the centre, and at the same moment we saw in lieu of them, as if created by magic, an equal line of infantry, with a considerable artillery in advance, which opened a furious cannonade with grape, while the musketry poured its volleys. The surprise was great and the moment most critical; but happily the heads kept their direction, and the heels were duly applied to the 'Charge!' which order was hailed with repeated huzzas. . . . The guns were quickly taken; but we then found that the chaussée, which ran through a hollow with steep banks, lay between them and the infantry. There was, however, no hesitation; every horse was true to his master, and the chaussée was passed in uninterrupted impetuous career. It was then, as we gained the crest, that the infantry poured its volley—but in vain. In vain also the first ranks kneeled and presented a steady line of bayonets. The impulse was too rapid, and the body attacking too solid, for any infantry power formed in line to oppose, although the ranks were three deep. Even the horses struck mortally at the brow of the bank had sufficient momentum to plunge upon the enemy in their fall, and assist the destruction of his defence. . . .

"The French cavalry, having gained the flanks of their infantry, endeavoured to take up a position

in its rear. Our squadrons, still on the gallop, closed to fill up the gaps which the French fire and bayonets had occasioned, and proceeded to the attack on the French cavalry, which, though it had suffered from the fire of part of its own infantry, seemed resolved to await the onset; but their discipline or their courage failed, and our horses' heads drove on them just as they were on the half-turn to retire. A dreadful massacre followed. In a chase of four miles, twelve hundred horsemen were cut down, of which about five hundred were Black Hussars. One farrier of the 15th alone killed twenty-two men. The French were so panic-struck that they scarcely made any resistance, notwithstanding that our numbers were so few in comparison with the party engaged, that every individual pursuer found himself in the midst of a flock of foes."

That gallant gallop of the four squadrons, in a word, broke into fragments a solid mass of infantry 4000 strong. For daring it rivals the charge of the 13th Light Dragoons at Talavera; for results, it almost equals the famous charge of the German cavalry at Mars-la-Tour. Wilson says "they actually rode through 12,000 men and 60 pieces of cannon in position." "Reflecting on it at this distant date," he wrote long afterwards, "I do think the deed the most daring in conception, the most resolute in execution, and the most unaccountable in its

success that ever fell under my notice. For the troops, particularly the infantry, were the best regiments in the French service, and not a man quitted his ranks until they were pierced by our charge."

The charge should have been supported by the Heavy Cavalry under Mansell, but by some blunder in the orders, no support was given, and this brought much discredit on the "Heavies." These had to execute a somewhat desperate charge two days after, and the Duke of York, in riding down the line, said, "Gentlemen, you must repair the disgrace of the 24th." Mansell, the general commanding, by way of "repairing the disgrace," deliberately threw away his life. He despatched his aides-de-camp on various errands, forbade his orderly dragoon to follow him, coolly rode alone into the enemy's ranks, and died fighting.

Many of Sir Robert Wilson's pictures of that disastrous campaign are singularly graphic. Here is a vivid pen-picture, for example, of the mad, confused fight at Mouveaux:—

"The cry of 'Charge to the right!' ran down the column, and in the same moment we were all at full speed. The enemy redoubled his efforts, and struck at us with his bayonets fixed at the end of his muskets, as we wheeled round the dreaded and dreadful corner, already almost choked with the fallen horses and men which had perished in the

attempt to pass. My little mare received here a bayonet-wound in the croup, and a musket-ball through the crest of her neck. Two balls lodged in my cloak-case behind the saddle, and another carried away part of my sash. Our surgeon and his horse were killed close at my side, and a dozen of my detachment fell at that spot under the enemy's fire. We still urged on, *ventre à terre*, pursued by bullets. Suddenly, before the least notice could be given, the whole column of cavalry was arrested in its career, and at the same moment, of course, recoiled several yards. The confusion, the conflict for preservation, the destruction which ensued, baffles all description. Three-fourths of the horses, at one and the same moment, were thrown down with their riders under them or entangled by the bodies of others. The battling of the horses to recover themselves, the exclamations of all sorts which resounded through the air, accompanied by the volleys of the triumphing enemy, presented a picture *d'enfer* which, as one of the French then firing upon us, and afterwards taken, told me, even made his own and his comrades' hair stand on end. . . . It was not till I got over the ditch that I saw the cause of our calamity. Fifty-six pieces of cannon with their tumbrils, &c., stood immovable in the road, the drivers having cut away the traces and escaped with the horses when they found the enemy's fire surrounding them. Such was the consequence of

sending out as drivers the refuse of our gaols—for that was the practice of that day."

"Never," is Wilson's comment on this affair—"never could a column be more completely surrounded and by five times its numbers; never did a body of men so circumstanced escape with such a comparatively small loss." Describing, again, the struggle round the village of Pontachin, Wilson says: "A column of 1800 French had endeavoured to force its way through some orchards. When the mass was wedged in one of them which had a very small outlet, the Austrians had opened a battery of twelve guns—12-pounders—upon it, and with such remarkable razing precision and effect, that I myself counted 280 headless bodies. Such a beheading carnage was perhaps never paralleled."

At Tourcoing, on May 18–22, the Allies were badly beaten. An elaborate attempt was made to cut off the French at Lille, the Allied forces being broken up into a series of minute and detached columns spread over a wide area. Success depended upon uniformity of movement and loyalty of mutual support; and with troops of various nationalities under divided generalship, these were conditions certain not to prevail. The Austrian generalship was scandalous. Craig, the Duke of York's Adjutant-General, wrote to Dundas, the Secretary for War, "I am every day more and more convinced that they have not an officer among them." Of the

plan which led to the disaster of Tourcoing he wrote, "There is not a corporal of the Guards who could not have foretold the event." Of the six columns set in movement, only two—those under British command—carried out the part assigned to them; they were left unsupported, fought with desperate courage, were overwhelmed by numbers, and fell back fighting doggedly, and with a loss of nineteen guns out of twenty-eight. "What is worse than all," wrote Craig, "we have lost the right of saying that the British have never been beaten by their present enemy." "We never saw an Austrian," records Craig, "but by twos and threes running away;" and yet eighteen Austrian battalions were to have supported the British attack!

On June 26, Lord Moira with 7000 men landed at Ostend and marched across the enemy's front to join the Duke of York near Ghent. The 33rd regiment, under "Lieut.-Colonel Arthur Wellesley," formed part of his troops, and the greatest of English soldiers was here to make his first acquaintance with the realities of war. The Allies were now falling back before the victorious French along the whole frontier, and so persistently did the Austrians fail in holding the positions assigned to them, that on July 7 even the inert Duke of York wrote to Prince Coburg telling him bluntly that "the opinion which the British nation must have on the subject cannot be other than that we are betrayed and sold

to the enemy." Prussia had already withdrawn from the contest, the interests of Austria were elsewhere, and the British and the Dutch were practically abandoned to their fate.

On July 15 the thin cohesion of the Allied forces definitely snapped. The French, by a fierce attack, broke through betwixt the Austrian right and the left of the Anglo-Dutch forces. The two fragments fell back in diverging lines, the Austrians eastward towards Coblentz, the Anglo-Dutch columns to the north-eastwards, towards Holland. Winter came on, keen and bitter, but there was no "going into winter quarters" after the leisurely fashion in which war had hitherto been conducted. In the icy breath of that terrible winter, river, canal, and quagmire were turned into one far-stretching and gleaming floor of solid ice; and to troops who could march shoeless across the frozen plains and rivers, and fight amidst blinding snowstorms, a winter campaign was quite possible.

The French, fiercely led, and full both of revolutionary passion and the *élan* of victory, pressed eagerly on. The retreat of the British across Holland in that dreadful winter, in some faint degree at least, resembled the retreat of the French from Moscow. The country was barren, the villages hostile. Supplies failed. The days were short and stormy, the nights long, black, and tempestuous. Many of the wounded were frozen to death in the waggons which slowly crept across the wind-scourged and desolate

landscape. The furious winds drove the whirling snow over the frozen plains in blasts so wild that it was scarcely possible to stand up against their force.

Wellesley greatly distinguished himself in the retreat. In the attack on Boxtel the assault failed, the British were falling back, and in a narrow way horsemen and infantry were mingled in leaderless confusion. The French saw their opportunity, and their cavalry came forward at speed. Suddenly a steadfast red line was drawn across the road in the path of the galloping horsemen. Wellesley had opened the files of the 33rd to let the tumult of broken infantry and cavalry flow through, then, closing his files again, he waited for the French attack. The horsemen came on at a furious pace; Wellesley, with characteristic coolness, held his fire till the French were within pistol-shot distance, then he threw in a volley so sure and deadly that the foremost horses and men tumbled before it, and the rear ranks swung round and galloped off. Wellesley, in this, his first serious fight, was only twenty-five years old, but he showed a touch of that iron coolness and genius for battle which explains the Peninsula and Waterloo. The 33rd formed part of the rear-guard in that disastrous and bitter retreat, and it is curious to reflect how the course of history might have been changed if Wellesley had fallen, the leader of a beaten rear-guard, in some distracted skirmish amongst the swamps and dykes of Holland.

The shattered remains of this ill-fated expedition embarked at Bremen and Cuxhaven for England. Amongst the survivors, says Brenton, "were few who had not lost a limb; many had lost both legs and arms; numbers of them were reduced to mere skeletons." A return of killed or dead in service for the campaign of 1793 alone amounted, as we have seen, to 18,596. The campaign failed from helpless, drivelling delay; from half-senile folly, and from pure bat-eyed selfishness. The forces England selfishly expended in the siege of Dunkirk, or suffered to be killed by yellow fever in the West Indies, might have held Toulon and secured the triumph of La Vendée, and so put a chain on the lunatic folly and cruelty which raged at Paris.

Prussia already, on April 5, had made a separate peace with the Republic; on July 22 Spain signed a similar treaty. The French had overrun Holland; Pichegru was in occupation of Amsterdam; and the United Provinces concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with France. Flushing was to be held by a French garrison; twelve Dutch ships of the line, with frigates, were to be added to the French fleets in the North Sea and the Baltic. Great Britain was left alone. The first coalition had ended in disaster and ignominy, and Pitt had to weave, with what art he could, the web of a new and yet more costly coalition with Austria and Russia.

CHAPTER VI

SEA-DUELS

THE French Republic thus closed the first two years of the Great War, as far as military operations were concerned, in triumph. The Allied armies were menacing Paris itself in 1793; at the close of 1794 French troops were crossing the Rhine in triumph; Flanders was overrun, Holland revolutionised, La Vendée subdued, Toulon regained. The Convention itself in 1794 published a list of the triumphs of the French arms. In seventeen months they had won twenty-seven pitched battles, slain 80,000 of their enemies, and taken another 80,000 prisoners. On the Rhine, in Spain, in Savoy, in Italy, and in the Netherlands, they had conquered whole provinces.

French arithmetic is apt to be flushed with the hues of the imagination, but the successes of the Republic were both real and splendid. It had faced and shattered a great coalition; it had quenched in blood the revolt of its own provinces. Prussia had made peace at the cost of its Rhine provinces; Spain by the surrender of Hayti; Holland at the

cost of an offensive and defensive alliance, for which it had soon to pay the price in the destruction of its fleet and the loss of its richest colonies. Great Britain had embarked the shattered wrecks of its army at Bremen and Cuxhaven, had added £80,000,000 sterling to its public debt, and was left almost alone to face the triumphant Republic.

On the sea, however, the tricolour had everywhere suffered defeat; and if Great Britain had not quite attained that proud and absolute mastery of the ocean which the Nile and Trafalgar afterwards gave her, still her superiority was marked, if not final and decisive. Yet when the war broke out, Great Britain had less than ninety cruising ships fit for service, and though a recent vote of Parliament had increased the number of seamen to 45,000, this was still less than one-fourth of the naval force employed at the close of the American war. Not a single British ship of the line was in the Mediterranean. France, within a fortnight of the declaration of war, was able to despatch a strong squadron to the West Indies and to assemble a powerful fleet at Belleisle. It was not till July 14 that Lord Howe stood on guard in the Channel with a fleet of fifteen ships of the line. Hood had already sailed for the Mediterranean with a fleet of over twenty ships, and a powerful squadron had been despatched to the West Indies.

St. Vincent and Nelson are the two names most closely linked with the maritime supremacy of

England during the Great War. St. Vincent, later, helped to secure the triumph of the English flag on the sea by the wise and daring character he gave to English strategy. The first line of defence, he held, was outside the enemy's ports. So he carried to its highest point that great system of iron blockades which made impossible, in advance, all combinations of hostile fleets against England, and which in the very height of Napoleon's power wrecked all his plans for the invasion of England. If St. Vincent was the shield of England, Nelson was its sword. His fire and daring, his piercing vision, his tireless energy, his faculty for kindling duller souls to flame, his genius for leadership, made him for the fleets of England what Napoleon was for the armies of France—an inspiration, a symbol of victory.

But before St. Vincent had shaped the sea-strategy of England, or Nelson had become visible as a transcendent leader in sea-battle, English maritime superiority was more or less definitely assured. And it was due to some sea-going quality in the British sailor, some Viking strain in his blood, some superiority over his French rival, not so much in courage as in hardihood, in resource, in combative energy, in what may be called web-footed seamanship.

The war began, not with contests of great fleets, but with duels of single ships or of petty squadrons. Thus Hotham defeated a French squadron off

Leghorn; Cornwallis performed a similar feat near Belleisle; Bridport won a modest but satisfactory victory over a force greater than his own off L'Orient. But these were the mere clash of squadrons; the one great sea-battle of this period is the memorable engagement betwixt Howe and Villaret Joyeuse on June 1st. Its story is told, on the scale its importance deserves, in a separate chapter. But a splutter of sea-duels, furious and gallant, if intermittent, stretches through all the early years of the Revolutionary war, and is worth a brief description.

French privateers swarmed in the Channel, lean, hungry, tireless; shunning battle with armed ships, but snapping up the bluff-bowed and deep-laden merchantmen as, from every quarter of the compass, with wet decks and bleached canvas, they came tumbling towards English shores. The stately French line-of-battle ships were, for the most part, kept sealed up in Toulon or in Brest; but French frigates—usually beautiful models of the shipbuilder's art, and far exceeding in speed English ships of the same type—prowled through the Mediterranean or the Atlantic, or hunted in West Indian waters, hungry for booty. The balance of captures, of course, was enormously in favour of England. Thus in 1793 the British captured 52 French men-of-war and 88 privateers, while the French captured only 6 vessels—not one of them being a line-of-battle ship. In 1794 there were fewer French ships on the open

sea, but the British captured 36 French men-of-war (7 of them being line-of-battle ships) and lost only 10, one of these alone being a ship of the line. In 1795 the British captured 15 vessels and lost 6. Taking the whole course of the struggle, England captured 570 ships of war of all grades, mounting 15,934 guns; she lost to her foes only 59 ships of war, mounting 1272 guns. She captured ten ships, that is, for every one she lost. The British, of course, suffered a greater loss of merchant ships than the French, but this was because there were so many more British merchant ships afloat. Yet the loss by capture on her merchant fleets was, as Mahan shows, less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the annual volume of trade.

The imagination is, of course, more powerfully arrested by the great sea-battles of the period, the shock of mighty fleets as the long line of three-deckers closed in the wrestle and thunder of battle. But some of the most picturesque sea incidents of the period are the duels of single ships, of which the early years of the Revolutionary war supply so many examples. No finer test of seamanship, of resource, of daring in attack, and of exhaustless courage in defence, can be imagined than is supplied by some of the frigate engagements of that period.

A British frigate is, say, patrolling some wide stretch of the stormy Atlantic, or cruising in the huge rollers of the Bay of Biscay, or in the lonely

stretch of the Indian Ocean to the east of Madagascar. The look-out, perched on its lofty topmast, catches in the grey haze of the early dawn a gleam of a white sail breaking the clear line of the eastern sea-rim. Then follows the eager chase. By a hundred subtle hints—the rake of the masts, the cut of the sails, the angle of the bowsprit, the very sag of the rigging—the strange ship is known to be an enemy. The decks are cleared for action, the men strip for the fight, the magazine is opened, the guns are manned. A stern silence falls on the crowded decks as, under shortened canvas, the hostile ships approach each other. A grim and ordered silence was, indeed, the unvarying characteristic of an English ship as it ran down to meet its foe. The Frenchman, on the other hand, came to the fight with a tumult of excited voices filling all its decks; and it is probable that the iron silence of a British ship, if only as the expressive proof of steadfast discipline, was a great aid to victory. The French are a gallant race, and they fought their ships with unfailing courage; but the sea strain in the blood of English sailors gave them a curious superiority over their foes. And in the later stages of the war, when the English supremacy on the sea had grown absolute, British sailors went into a sea-fight with an assured confidence of victory, while French sailors, in spite of their natural courage, were usually oppressed by an expectation

of defeat; and these opposite expectations naturally tended to fulfil themselves.

There were no spectators in such a combat as we are picturing. It was fought sometimes to the accompaniment of a tempest, often in the gloom of midnight. As the contending ships drifted closer together, the darting flames of their broadsides grew quicker and fiercer, the eddying smoke filled the decks with its strangling vapour, the lofty spars came crashing down on the shot-torn decks. Then came the grinding shock of the great hulls as they met, the rush of the boarders, the fierce struggle on the enemy's deck, the clash of cutlass on cutlass, the sound of pistol-shots, the shout of the combatants; and then the sudden triumph of victory. Blackened with smoke, and bleeding, perhaps, from wounds, the exultant seamen look round on the splintered bulwarks and blood-splashed timbers of the ship they have captured. In the naval warfare of that period there are scores of exactly such combats, often waged and won against amazing odds. These sea-duels, solitary and apparently trivial, forgotten now of history, reflect the essential differences of the two nations, and are unconscious prophecies of the final issue of the whole struggle. As samples of the fighting of the period, let the tale of one or two of such combats be told.

The earliest successes fell to the British. On March 13, for example, the gun-brig *Scourge* captured

the first prize of the war, a French privateer of much greater force than itself; and on April 14, the *Phaeton*, a 38-gun frigate belonging to a small squadron under Rear-Admiral Gell, captured a heavily-armed French privateer with two Spanish prizes of extraordinary value. One of the Spaniards carried specie to the amount of nearly £1,000,000 sterling. Lord Hood's share, as commander-in-chief, was £50,000; the captains of Admiral Gell's squadron received £30,000 each. Great was the delight in British forecastles and on British quarter-decks over a capture so golden!

Lord Howe's fleet had no such stroke of good luck, but its earliest cruise was marked by a fine example of naval daring.

On November 18, in wild weather off Brest, Howe was in close pursuit of a strong French squadron. Howe's outlook, the 38-gun frigate *Latona*, was the only British ship that could reach the slower vessels lagging in the French rear. The *Latona* exchanged broadsides gallantly with the two rearmost French frigates, each of its own strength, and tried to cut off one of them. Two French seventy-fours put about, and, rolling wildly in the furious sea, bore down upon the *Latona*. That audacious ship exchanged broadsides with both of them, and its shooting was of so much better quality than theirs, that it partially disabled the French commodore's flagship, and both the French ships at last drew off.

Here, in brief, was an impertinent British frigate harrying a whole squadron of French seventy-fours, much as a loudly barking sheep-dog worries a flock of sheep!

A typical example of these sea-duels is supplied by the engagement betwixt the *Nymph*, under Captain Edward Pellew, and the *Cleopatre*, under Captain Mullon. The fight took place off the Lizard on June 18, 1793. It was scarcely dawn, the stars were still shining in the summer night sky, when, a dark blot against the eastern horizon, the look-out of the *Nymph* discovered the Frenchman. The *Nymph* was a ship of about 900 tons burden, and carried twenty guns. The *Cleopatre* was of about the same size, and carried nearly the same weight of metal, but had a crew of 320 men as against 240 of the *Nymph*. Pellew, afterwards Lord Exmouth, was a sailor of a particularly fine type, but he had a raw crew, largely composed of Cornish miners not yet educated into seamanship; while the *Cleopatre* was the crack ship of her class in the French navy. Pellew, however, ran coolly down to his enemy. At six o'clock the ships were within hail of each other, but as yet not a shot had been fired. The French captain was busy delivering an oration to his crew from the break of the quarter-deck, flourishing in his hand a cap of liberty, which he presently handed to a sailor, who ran aloft with it and nailed it to the masthead of the *Cleopatre*. Oratory filled a large

space in the preparation for battle on French quarter-decks at this period. Pellew was attempting no oratory, but was keenly watching how his guns bore on the Frenchman. Then, at a gesture from him, the guns of the *Nymph* leaped into flame, and the *Cleopatre* gallantly answered.

The two ships ran before the wind, exchanging quick broadsides, till the *Cleopatre* swung her head round to bear up. At that moment her mizzen-mast and wheel were shot away; she drifted with her nose on to the *Nymph*, and the Frenchman's jib-boom was thrust, like a Titanic lance, betwixt the English ship's foremast and mainmast. Then, as she dragged round, side by side with the *Nymph*, it became a question whether the *Nymph's* already wounded mainmast or the *Cleopatre's* jib-boom would yield to the strain. With a far-heard crash the Frenchman's jib-boom broke short off, her head swung clear; but by this time the English boarders were swarming over the *Cleopatre's* quarters. Pellew's Cornishmen were not yet seamen, but they were big men, with the fighting energy native to their blood, and the more weakly-built Frenchmen were swept away by their rush, and at ten minutes to seven the tricolour fluttered reluctantly down. "We dished her up," Pellew wrote to his brother, "in fifty minutes—the crack ship of France!"

Amongst the slain on the deck of the *Cleopatre* lay the body of her captain. A round shot had torn

away his hip. As he lay dying under that dreadful wound, he had in his pocket a list of French coast signals, and it was important that these should not fall into the hands of the English. Faint and dying from a wound so hideous, the captain of the *Cleopatre* drew from his pocket what he supposed to be these signals, and actually expired tearing the packet to pieces with his teeth. But that gallant effort was a failure. It was his own commission, it turned out, which he died trying to destroy. This famous frigate fight, taking place so early in the war, had real value as creating a confident expectation of victory in the British ships generally.

All British sea-battles, however, were not victories. A fight quite as gallant, but of an unlike fortune, was that betwixt the *Thames* and the *Uranie*, fought in the Atlantic on October 24, 1793. Here the superiority in force was overwhelmingly on the side of the French. The *Uranie* had nearly twice the tonnage, and more than twice the weight of fire of the English ship, and in addition she carried a crew of 320 men, as against 187 on the *Thames*. A grey fog lay heavy on the sea as the two ships closed, and for nearly four hours in that atmosphere of bewildering haze, the British ship fought her huge antagonist. The fighting was so close that the *Uranie* was able, from her lofty decks, to scourge the *Thames* with a constant stream of musketry, till almost every living

figure on that ship's upper deck had fallen; then the French made a resolute attempt to board. They were beaten back with great loss, and finally the big ship, finding its little antagonist too tough a morsel to swallow, put up its helm, and, itself in a sorely battered condition, bore away. The indomitable little *Thames* actually tried to pursue its big antagonist, but its sails were in rags, its rigging a tangle of flying ropes, its topmasts gone, its yards hanging in fragments, its bowsprit a splinter. Half its guns were dismounted, and the sea was pouring in through a dozen shot-holes below the water-line.

While lying in this wrecked condition, busily employed in repairing damages, a squadron of French frigates made its appearance. One of 40 guns ran down with widespread canvas to the battered *Thames*, tacked, ran under its stern, and raked it with a broadside. Then at last the plucky British ship struck its flag. The *Thames* was torn almost to fragments by the enemy's shot, its main-deck was a mere bed of splinters, nearly half its guns were dismounted. But the *Thames* had reduced its original and big opponent to a condition almost as desperate, and only surrendered when a second 40-gun frigate had commenced to rake her with new broadsides.

Another example of the enduring courage of the British seamen of that day is supplied by the story of the *Antelope*, a tiny Admiralty packet-boat, built for speed, not for fighting, mounting only six

3-pounders about the size of a blunderbuss, and having a crew of 21 men fit for service. The *Antelope* was three days out with mails from Port Royal, Jamaica, when two French privateers sighted her and at once bore up in pursuit. For two days the *Antelope* ran before her pursuers. She outsailed one completely, but the wind falling, the remaining privateer crept up by the aid of sweeps, and opened fire on the *Antelope*. That courageous little craft made such venomous use of her pocket-battery that her big antagonist drew off; but after a night's reflection the Frenchman, in the early morning, came resolutely on again and boarded the *Antelope*. A desperate fight raged on its narrow decks. All the officers of the packet-boat fell, but the boatswain took command; a midshipman—one of the *Antelope's* passengers—stood at the helm armed with a pike and a musket, and alternately steered the ship and joined in furious assaults on the French boarders. The privateer finally tried to sheer off, cutting the grapnels by which it held the packet-boat. The stubborn fight had now lasted for more than two hours; out of the 65 men who composed the crew of the privateer 32, including the captain and the first lieutenant, lay slain, and 17 were wounded. The 21 men on the *Antelope*, that is, had slain or wounded more than double their own number of the enemy. When the privateer attempted to sheer off, the

boatswain of the packet, its midshipman passenger, and the scanty survivors of its crew, tumbled furiously over the Frenchman's bulwarks, fought their way across its decks, encumbered with slain bodies, and hauled down its flag in triumph.

The *Antelope* carried off its prize—an ant escorting a beetle—to Jamaica, and the delighted House of Assembly there immediately directed the sum of 500 guineas to be distributed amongst the *Antelope's* crew. The courage of the Frenchmen in this action deserves admiration. They fought till two out of every three of their whole number had fallen; but the cool, obstinate, long-enduring pluck of the *Antelope's* crew represents the quality which makes intelligible the naval triumphs won by the English seamen of that day.

CHAPTER VII

TOULON AND CORSICA

THE war had scarcely begun when the opportunity of what might well have proved a decisive naval advantage was thrust on Great Britain.

Toulon was the great southern arsenal of France, and when, early in August, Lord Hood appeared off that port to blockade it, some thirty French line-of-battle ships—two of them of 120 guns—and more than twenty frigates were lying in it. More than one-third of the whole naval strength of France, in fact, was at that moment in Toulon. Hood's blockade was close and vigilant, and a dramatic event brought it to a sudden and triumphant close. The French provinces were rising against the Jacobin tyranny enthroned in Paris. The execution of the Girondists had kindled a revolt through the south of France. Marseilles, Lyons, and Toulon itself had declared against the Convention. The French fleet in Toulon, in its higher ranks at least, was infected with the prevailing sentiment, and the city authorities, after some negotiations with Hood, proclaimed Louis XVII. king, ran up the white flag, and the port and

the fleet were surrendered to the British. A Spanish fleet of fifteen ships of the line, under Admiral Gravina, hove in sight just as the negotiations for surrender were complete, and the two fleets sailed in together, a circumstance which increased Hood's perplexities without materially adding to his strength.

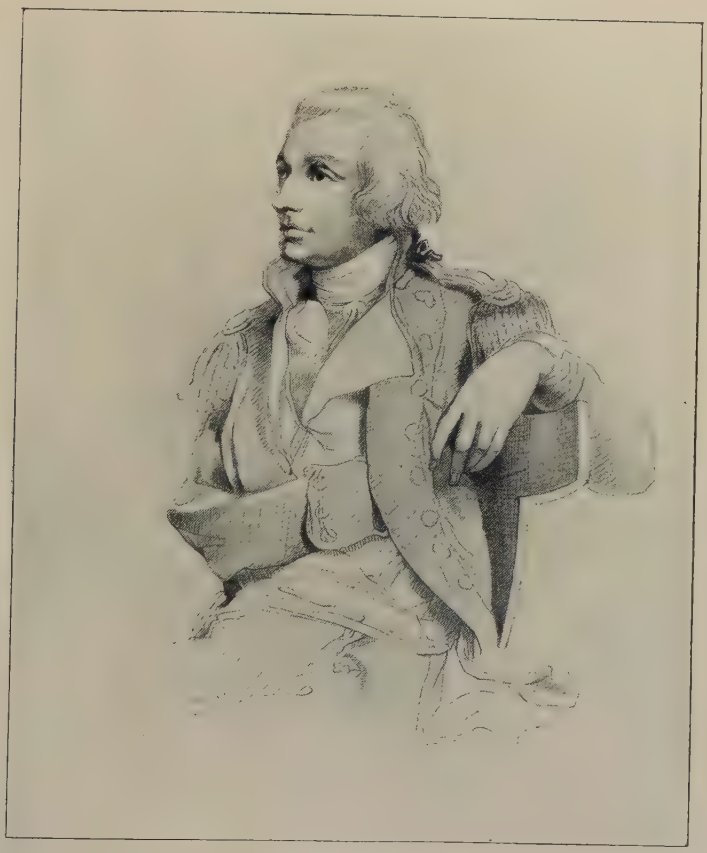
Hood, however, acted with vigour. He placed one of his captains, Elphinstone, of the *Robust*, in command of Fort La Mague, which commands the whole harbour, sent despatches to England announcing his success, and proceeded to collect troops from the nearest ports—from Malta, Gibraltar, and Naples—for the defence of the great prize which had fallen into his hands. Amongst the ships that sailed under Hood's flag into Toulon was the *Agamemnon*, with Nelson on its quarter-deck; and amongst the French artillery that soon crowned the heights which frowned down on Toulon, and opened fire on the guilty city, was a battery of guns commanded by Bonaparte. The two greatest figures in the Twenty Years' War thus for a moment crossed each other's path at the very beginning of that struggle.

Bonaparte was at that moment a moody, unsociable, olive-tinted captain of artillery, half Corsican, half Frenchman, not yet twenty-five years old, and almost wholly unknown. Strange dreams of a great destiny haunted the cells of his brain even at that early stage of his career; yet his record up to this point was anything but brilliant, and his future was

uncertain. The official report upon him when he left his military school described him as "capricious, haughty, extremely disposed to egoism . . . of unbounded aspirations." He had tried many things, and had failed in all. He had failed as an author, failed as a politician, failed even as a soldier. Before he was twenty-three years of age he had been, as Seeley puts it, "a rebel in Corsica, a deserter in France." His commission as captain, forfeited as the result of an ill-judged plunge into politics, was restored to him, but his first military undertaking, an expedition against Sardinia, had only added one more to the procession of failures which so far made up his biography.

But at Toulon Bonaparte found his chance. In battle with the British, more than twenty years afterwards, he was to meet with the irreparable overthrow which ended his career; but here in Toulon, in warfare against these same English, he was to win his earliest fame. And what other career in all history resembles that which, for Napoleon, lay betwixt Toulon and Waterloo!

Nelson was now thirty-six years of age, and though he had as yet performed no memorable feat, he curiously impressed every one who approached him with the sense of great qualities. His figure is stamped imperishably on the English imagination—the careless dress, the slender body, the boyish face, innocent of beard, with the eager forward



NELSON

From a lithograph by C. GRIGNON

set of the head, the hair brushed carelessly over the brow, the sensitive lips, the eyes, now of a tender blue, and now of a keen and steel-like grey. Nelson had many defects. If he was not vain, he had the sensitiveness which belongs to vanity. He was moody, irritable, fiercely impatient of pedantry and dulness. He hated Frenchmen with a half-humorous yet whole-hearted detestation, scarcely intelligible to-day. A deeply religious strain ran through his character, though his religion had the oddest limitations, as the story of Lady Hamilton shows. Nelson, it must be remembered, drew his birth from the eastern counties of England, steeped, to quote Dr. Conan Doyle, "in the virile Puritanism which sent from that district the Ironsides to fashion England within, and the Pilgrim Fathers to spread it without."

Nelson was a natural leader of men, with a genius for war which, on its proper element, the sea, was as dazzling as that of Napoleon himself. In a sense he was a greater leader than Napoleon. More than even Napoleon, Nelson had the power of taking, if not the imagination, yet the affections of men captive. Napoleon was jealous of his own marshals; he mistrusted them; he forgave their successes almost more reluctantly than their failures. He played them off against each other, and found an evil delight, if not a new security for himself, in Ney's hate of Masséna, and Lannes' scorn for Bessières, and Davoust's fierce

jealousy of Bernadotte. In Spain the quarrels of his marshals—quarrels which Napoleon himself fanned and on which he played — went far to wreck the fortunes of France.

But Nelson drew the hearts of his captains together as by some spell. His unselfishness, his mingled sweetness and melancholy, his fiery daring, his scorn of everything indirect and base, his passionate loyalty to his country, and his faculty for piercing, as with a lightning-stroke, into the heart of a difficulty, all combined to sway, as with some touch of magic, those about him. His slender and half-boyish frame, that gained a yet more fragile aspect later on when he was half-blind and one-armed, was another element of fascination in Nelson. His stalwart captains and hardy seamen had a sort of protective impulse towards him.

And yet in this frail-bodied, dyspeptic, half-blinded seaman there burned a dazzling fire of courage, beside which the daring of the bravest spirits in the fleet seemed pallid. Tennyson, years afterwards, sang of Nelson—

> "Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
> The greatest sailor since the world began."

And in the admiring devotion which Nelson aroused in his followers there was an element of human love which Napoleon, with all his arts and the magic of his genius, never kindled. "He lies to us always,"

said one of Napoleon's closest and most devoted followers. That element of falseness in Napoleon was fatal to perfect trust. But Nelson was of flawless truth and loyalty, and loyalty in him evoked loyalty in his sea-captains. "We were," said Nelson, "a band of brothers."

When the news of the surrender of Toulon reached England, Pitt asked one of his military advisers how many men would be sufficient to hold the place? "Fifty thousand good troops," was the answer, and that estimate was both wise and sober. "I am much mistaken," Grenville wrote to his brother, "if the business at Toulon is not decisive of the war." Yet the British Government, which was employing 20,000 men at that moment to besiege Dunkirk, and which shortly afterwards sent 15,000 gallant troops to perish of fever in the West Indies, could only find 2000 British soldiers to keep Toulon, the great naval arsenal of France, and which held in its harbour one-third of the whole navy of France!

A curve of craggy heights sweeps round Toulon and commands it on almost every side. Hood had, thus, to guard a hilly front of not less than fifteen miles, and assailable at a score of points. The British hold of Toulon depended on the presence of the British fleet in its harbour. But if the French could, from any point, sweep the harbour with their fire, the British ships must retire, and Toulon fall. The attacking force consisted of from 30,000

to 40,000 troops, fresh from the capture of Lyons and the massacres at Marseilles, full of a courage inflamed by victory, and plentifully flavoured with ferocity. Hood with difficulty raked together a composite force of about 16,000—Spaniards, Neapolitans, Piedmontese, and French Royalists, the sweepings of half a continent; of the whole body, only 2000 were British, and of the whole hybrid force more than 4000 were in hospital. Hood, it may be added, had almost as much trouble with his allies as with the French themselves. Of the part contributed by the Spaniards Nelson writes, "They behaved so infamously that I sincerely wished not one ship or soldier was in Toulon. They would do nothing but plunder and cut the throats of poor wretches who had surrendered to the British." The Spaniards, however, were disposed to look on Toulon as their own. Thus the Spanish admiral reported to Hood that "the king of Spain had appointed him to the office of commander-in-chief of the combined forces in Toulon," and by way of enforcing his claims to that office, three Spanish three-deckers significantly took up a position so as to command with their fire Hood's flagship, the *Victory*. Hood, however, was quite inaccessible to Spanish logic of that quality, and sternly kept his flag as admiral flying.

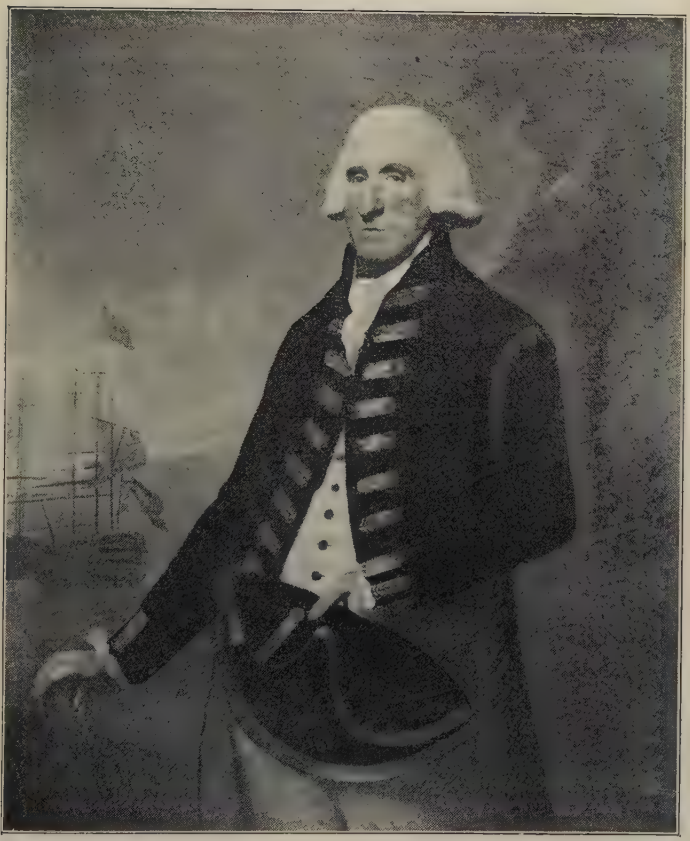
General O'Hara arrived from Gibraltar and took command of the garrison. The French attack was pushed fiercely, their object being to establish

batteries on the heights which commanded the harbour. The British tactics consisted in storming and destroying in turn each battery the French established. In the struggle for the possession of the battery on the heights of Arenas, the vehemence of the British betrayed them into disaster. The height was stormed, the broken enemy was eagerly pursued across the valley in its rear to a second range of heights. Here, when broken with the ardour of their own charge and breathless from their climb, the British were in turn assailed by an overwhelming force. Two-thirds of their number were slain or made prisoners, amongst the latter being the unfortunate General O'Hara himself. Bonaparte had already shown the sureness of his military glance by fixing on the most vulnerable point in the British defence—a redoubt known as Fort Mulgrave or Little Gibraltar, on the rocky tongue of land which, to the west, divides the inner from the outer bay. If this were carried, the inner road would be commanded by the French guns, and the British fleet must either withdraw or be sunk at its anchors.

On the night of December 18, while a tempest raged, the French made a determined attack on three separate points in the British defences. Fort Mulgrave was carried; at almost the same moment the position on Mount Pharon, to the north, was seized. The whole town and port lay thus under

the stroke of the French guns. A council of war was held, and it was resolved to abandon Toulon. Hood, for the purpose of getting rid of an embarrassment, had despatched 5000 French sailors—the crews of the surrendered French ships—in four of the least serviceable of the captured seventy-fours, without guns and under flags of truce, to the nearest French ports. But there remained in the docks and harbour of Toulon a magnificent French fleet, which, in the tumult and distraction of that wild night, Hood could neither carry off nor effectually destroy. Had he, indeed, despatched all the French ships to England immediately on their surrender, they would have constituted the most magnificent trophy any nation ever won at sea. This had not been done, partly out of regard for Spanish susceptibilities, as by the fortunate circumstance of his arrival at the exact moment of the surrender of the port, the Spanish admiral claimed a share in the prizes.

Hood committed the task of destroying the French ships to Sidney Smith, afterwards the defender of Acre. The ships must be destroyed before daylight. Sidney Smith had thus a task almost as difficult as that of Lord Cochrane in the Basque Roads. But he carried it out with something of Cochrane's genius and daring. He was, unfortunately, embarrassed with some Spanish "assistance." The Spaniards failed to carry out their part of the night's programme; they set fire to a powder-ship



ADMIRAL HOOD

From the painting by LEMUEL FRANCIS ABBOTT

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instead of sinking it, with the result that the explosion destroyed one of the English gunboats. The night scene was one of terror and magnificence. From the heights above the French guns thundered fiercely; French troops were already forcing their way into the town. The flames of burning ships lit the whole circle of the hills. The criminals in the prisons had broken loose, and the inhabitants of Toulon were crowding the piers and the beach, seeking escape to the ships. The sharp crackle of musketry, the sullen boom of cannon, the roar of exploding magazines, the shrieks of women and children, filled the midnight skies with tumult. Nearly 15,000 of the inhabitants of Toulon were received on board the British ships; the flagship, the *Princess Royal*, at one time was crowded on every deck with no less than 4000 of these unhappy wretches, fleeing from the pitiless cruelty of their own countrymen.

Nelson saw and described some of these fugitives when they arrived at Leghorn. "Fathers," he wrote, "are here without families, and families without fathers, the pictures of horror and despair." The Committee of Public Safety, by a decree which recalls that issued by Philip II. of Spain against his revolted provinces in Holland, had sentenced the entire inhabitants of Toulon to death! Fréron, the delegate of the Committee, wrote, "We have required from the surrounding departments 12,000

masons to demolish and raze the city. Every day since our arrival we have cut off 200 heads." Fouché, afterwards Napoleon's Minister of Police, was present, and wrote to his friend Collet d'Herbois, "This night we send 213 rebels *sous le feu de la foudre;*" and many succeeding nights witnessed like deeds. Toulon had 28,000 inhabitants when the white flag was hoisted; a month after the British had left it, only 7000 were surviving!

The French fleet was only partially destroyed. James, in his "Naval History," computes that 33 ships of all sizes, ranging from a three-decker of 120 guns to a 14-gun brig, were destroyed or brought away as prizes; but 25 fine ships were left comparatively uninjured, and some of them formed afterwards part of the French fighting line at the Nile. Amongst the British prizes was the *Commerce de Marseille,* said to have been nearly the largest and quite the most beautiful warship at that time afloat, a three-decker that sailed and worked like a frigate; yet, by some curious official freak, she was never commissioned as a British cruiser.

The episode at Corsica belongs, in part at least, to this period, and is worth telling briefly, not only for the brilliant part taken in it by the British navy, but for the curious circumstance that for three years it brought the island under the crown of England, and, in a sense, made Bonaparte—at the very moment when he was suppressing the

rising of the Sections against the Directory in Paris, and while afterwards he was pursuing his dazzling career of victory in Italy—a British subject! Every one knows that Bonaparte was a Corsican by birth, but not many remember that from 1794 to 1797 George III. was king of Corsica.

When forced to withdraw from Toulon, Hood anchored his fleet in the Bay of Hyères, a little to the east of Toulon, and within a few hours' sail of Corsica. Paoli at that moment was the uncrowned king of Corsica, having driven the French authorities from the island; and, for the purpose of strengthening himself against the French, Paoli opened communications with Hood and proposed that he should join in the siege of the places in the island over which the French flag yet flew, and unite Corsica to the British crown. The British Government consented to the attempt, and the British fleet, under Lord Hood, on February 19, commenced operations by driving the French out of San Fiorenzo. Nelson in the *Agamemnon*, meanwhile, was attacking Bastia on the other side of the long hornlike peninsula running northward, into which Corsica resolves itself. There were 2000 British troops, under the command of General Dundas, on board the fleet; but Dundas, a mere pedant in a red coat, declared the attack on Bastia to be "visionary and rash," and refused to entangle himself with the business.

Nelson was only the more eager to prove that sailors could accomplish what soldiers feared to attempt, and pushed on the siege with great energy and in the face of tremendous difficulties. The *Agamemnon* had been so long at sea that her stores were exhausted, and the ship itself was in a melancholy state of disrepair. Nelson wrote to Hood, "We are without firing, wine, beef, or flour, and almost without water. Not a rope, canvas, twine, or nail in the ship. . . . Not a man has slept dry for many months." Yet Nelson pressed on the siege with fiery energy. "Our country," he wrote to Hood, "will, I believe, sooner forgive an officer for attacking the enemy too rashly than for not making the attempt." And Nelson succeeded. He so worried the garrison day and night, and showed an enterprise so fierce and tireless, that on April 22 it surrendered, and 4500 men, holding a strong town, laid down their arms to some 1250 British marines and sailors!

The siege of Calvi followed. As the British troops were now under Sir John Stuart, a resolute soldier, afterwards the victor of Maida, they took an active part in the operations; but the marshy country round Calvi was a deadly fever-bed, and in a single fortnight the English had 1500 men struck down with disease. Hood was covering the siege from a threatened attack by the fleet the French had, by this time, organised at Toulon. Nelson had charge of the

attack on Calvi from the sea. It was here that a blast of sand, driven by a cannon-ball that ricocheted over his head, cost him the sight of his right eye. Moore, who afterwards fell at Corunna, was Stuart's second in command. Nelson and Moore were men of vehement will and of very diverse intellectual type, and their relations became very strained. The wasted British force could scarcely hold the entrenchments in front of Calvi. "We have upwards of 1000 sick out of 2000," wrote Nelson, "and the others are not much better than so many phantoms. As for myself," he added, "I am here a reed amongst the oaks. I have all the diseases there are, but there is not enough in my frame for them to fasten on." The siege, however, urged on land by Stuart and Moore, and from the sea by Nelson, could scarcely fail, and on August 10 Calvi surrendered. On June 21, 1794, the General Assembly of Corsica adopted a new constitution, under which George III. became its king.

Elliot, however, and not Paoli, was appointed viceroy, and from that moment Paoli used all his matchless craft, and his wizard-like influence over the Corsicans, to destroy the Government which had failed to make him its representative. For the sake of completeness, the rest of the tale may be told here, though it scarcely belongs to this period. Elliot, a man of high character and great ability, was scarcely fitted to deal with a sly, subtle, and

slippery character like Paoli—a character very unlike that which Boswell has painted. His scorn of the unscrupulous Corsican and his falsehoods wrecked his patience. He declared of Paoli, "He is more regardless of truth than any man I ever met with. He seems totally incapable of truth, honour, or good sense." But Paoli understood his Corsicans. He alarmed their superstitions, he pricked their vanity, he kindled their fiery racial pride against the British. His art was such that he even made the commander of the British forces his ally in resisting the authority of the British viceroy. Every sort of slander was circulated against the perplexed representative of George III. The unfortunate Elliot was conspired against in Corsica and forgotten in England. Soon the island was in revolt. The king's writ no longer ran; Acts of Parliament were publicly burned in the villages.

The choice lay betwixt fighting the Corsicans or abandoning Corsica. Elliot begged permission to leave "this country of shabby politics." England had no strength to waste on a distant and rebellious dependency. In September 1796 Elliot received orders to evacuate the island, and King George III. lost his tiny and spitfire kingdom. Corsica lapsed to France, but Paoli, whose life would not have been safe for an hour under the tricolour, fled from the island, and died a British pensioner, under the shelter of the very flag he had betrayed.

CHAPTER VIII

CONTENDING FLEETS

THE victories of the First of June and of Trafalgar stand in a certain relation to each other. They are the first and the last in a succession of great sea-battles fought betwixt Revolutionary and Imperial France and Great Britain for the mastery of the sea. The battle of the First of June failed in its immediate object; it was curiously marred by faults both of conduct and of tactics. But it is memorable as striking the keynote of victory for the British flag in this great war, and as being the first of a procession of triumphs which has made possible for the English-speaking race an empire founded on the dominion of the sea.

The armies of Revolutionary France at the beginning of 1794 were, as we have seen, triumphant everywhere. The energy of the Revolutionary Government, aided by the genius of Carnot, had in two years raised the effective forces of the Republic from 42,000 to over 730,000; and the increase in fighting quality, and in effectiveness of equipment, was almost as wonderful as the expansion in mere numbers. No

wonder the armies of Continental Europe crumbled before the suddenly developed military strength of the Republic! But why should French victories be confined to the land? Why should not the sailors of the Revolution win triumphs as glorious as its soldiers? The Convention spared no pains to raise the courage of its fleets. It had already passed a decree forbidding the captain of any French ship, under the penalty of the guillotine, to strike his flag until at sinking-point, no matter by what force assailed; and since French courage and French imagination are closely related to each other, pains were taken to fire the imagination of French sailors with tales of fabulous sea-victories over the British.

A proclamation, in the name of the Convention, was published in all French seaports, announcing that, for French sailors, victory was a confirmed habit. They had never been beaten in a sea-fight on equal terms by the seamen of any other nation! This gratifying fact, it was explained, was admitted by British admirals themselves; and the unfortunate Admiral Byng, shot on his own quarter-deck for his failure off Minorca, was quoted as having said in his defence, "I defy any one to produce me a single example where the English have conquered on the sea with an equal force." This, of course, was a statement created by the French imagination, as well as addressed to it. But the proclamation, which was directed to be read by the captain of each French ship

to his crew, had at least some effect. A sanguine temper awoke in the fleets of France. The Convention took sterner measures for hardening the courage of its admirals. As with the armies, so with the fleets, special commissioners were appointed to represent the authority of the Convention, and to hold the shadow of the guillotine over all operations against the enemy. Robespierre in person, for example, told Admiral Villaret Joyeuse, Howe's opponent in the battle of the First of June, that failure would cost him his head.

If victory at the beginning of 1794 sat upon the banners of the Republic abroad, famine brooded over its plains and cities at home. The harvest had failed. The general break-up of society told heavily on all the industries of the realm, and since French citizens could not subsist on victories, no matter how splendid, or on political doctrines, no matter how virtuous, there was wide-spread discontent throughout France. The Convention acted with characteristic energy. Enormous supplies of food-stuffs were purchased by its agents in the United States, and early in April a convoy of 160 ships, with cargoes valued at £5,000,000, was ready to sail for France from American ports. The problem was how to bring this huge convoy, on which depended almost the existence of France, safely across the sea to Brest. A squadron, consisting of two line-of-battle ships and three frigates, under a gallant and skilful officer,

Admiral Van Stabel, took charge of this great flock of merchant ships as it came swarming out of Chesapeake Bay on April 11; a second squadron, of five ships of the line and some frigates, sailed from Brest on the same date under Rear-Admiral Nielly, to meet the American fleet at a point a hundred leagues west of Belleisle; while on May 16, a great fleet of twenty-five ships of the line, under Villaret Joyeuse, set sail to join Admiral Nielly off Belleisle, and bring the convoy at all hazards—and specially at the hazard of the Admiral's own head—in safety to Brest.

The British Admiralty resolved to strike at the American convoy, but it made the great blunder of not intercepting it at the point of departure. Lord Howe, with a fleet of thirty-four ships of the line and fifteen frigates, was lying at Spithead. Had the wiser policy of sealing up French fleets in French ports by tireless blockades—the policy carried out with such magnificent energy by St. Vincent and Nelson and Collingwood seven years later—prevailed in 1794, Howe would have been, not lying at anchor in Spithead, but holding Villaret Joyeuse imprisoned in Brest. Howe disapproved, however, of blockades. They strained the ships, he complained. They were uncomfortable for the men. They involved a great expenditure of stores. He failed to see that a great blockade was the finest possible school of sea-discipline. It hardened

the courage of the crews of a fleet and made perfect the seamanship of its officers. It may be added that history has certainly justified the strategy of holding the enemy's fleets locked up relentlessly in their own ports. But Howe was content to keep his fleet anchored at Spithead, and push out a line of frigates, like so many tentacles, to keep watch over Brest, and report any movements of the French fleet there. As a result, Nielly first, and Villaret Joyeuse next, got clear away to sea, and on May 2 Howe weighed anchor in pursuit of both.

He first convoyed a fleet of merchantmen as far as the Lizard, then detached a squadron of eight line-of-battle ships, under Admiral Montague, to protect the merchant-fleet as far as Cape Finisterre, thus reducing his own force to twenty-six ships of the line. Montague, with six ships of the line, was instructed to cover the 200 miles of sea betwixt Cape Ortegal and the latitude of Belleisle, so as to intercept the American convoy, while Howe himself went in pursuit of Villaret Joyeuse. This was Howe's second blunder in tactics. It was clear that Villaret Joyeuse had fixed upon some point at which he was to meet the convoy, and Howe had only to follow on the French admiral's track to be sure of meeting both him and the convoy. By detaching Montague on a separate course, he exposed that squadron to the risk of being crushed by the French fleet from Brest, and made it certain that

if Nielly had effected a junction with his admiral, Howe's own fleet, when Villaret Joyeuse was overtaken, would find itself in the presence of a greatly superior enemy.

Fortune, however, favoured Howe. On the morning of May 28, faint against the south-eastern horizon, whence a fresh gale was blowing, gleamed the topmasts of a great fleet. It was Villaret Joyeuse ten miles to windward. The French fleet was in an irregular line steering to the south-east. Howe threw his fleet into a corresponding line, and spread every inch of canvas to overtake his enemy. The French ships were quick and weatherly, while the British, if they had better seamanship, had poorer vessels, and Howe found he could neither weather on his enemy, nor, with the body of his fleet, overtake them. He threw out an advanced squadron of four of his handiest and quickest seventy-fours—the *Bellerophon*, the *Russell*, the *Marlborough*, and the *Thunderer*—and succeeded in reaching with these what might be described as the tail of Villaret Joyeuse's straggling line. The four British seventy-fours, in fact, may be regarded as a claw clutching at the feathers in the French admiral's tail. The hindmost ship in the French line was a two-decker, and, late in the afternoon, the leading English ship, the *Russell*, opened fire upon her.

A French three-decker of 110 guns, the *Revolutionnaire*, gallantly backed her topsails and took the

place of the two-decker, as the most exposed ship of the fleet. No one of the British seventy-fours stood the least chance singly against this huge opponent, but each in turn, as it came within striking distance, opened fire upon her. One of the British ships was quickly disabled, and fell out of the fight, but the Frenchman, in turn, lost its mizzen-mast, and had to wear and run before the wind, coming, as it did so, under the fire of both the *Leviathan* and the *Audacious*. The other British ships obeyed the signal of recall, but the *Audacious*, in a fashion worthy of its name, hung on the huge quarter of the *Revolutionnaire*, a ship twice its own tonnage and nearly twice its own weight of fire.

Night came on, and darkness crept over the face of the sea, but still could be seen through the gloom, like the thrust of fiery sword-blades, the quick-answering pulses of flame betwixt the French three-decker and the British seventy-four. At ten o'clock the French ship was almost crippled; she had lost nearly 400 men and was half dismasted. The *Audacious*, on the other hand, though much cut up, had only three men killed and twenty wounded—so much deadlier was the fire of the British ship than that of the Frenchman. The two combatants drifted apart, and when morning dawned were far to leeward of their respective fleets. A seventy-four and a frigate were despatched by the French admiral in search of

the *Revolutionnaire*, and, but for the friendly concealment of the fog, they must have picked up the *Audacious* in their search. Later in the morning the sorely-battered *Audacious* sighted her old antagonist with all her masts gone, but as the other French ships were coming quickly up, the English ship had no choice but to run for Plymouth, while the crippled French three-decker was towed by a frigate into Rochefort. The French had thus lost a three-decker and the English a seventy-four as the result of their first meeting.

All night the two fleets ran on parallel lines, the French about three miles to windward, and by the morning the better seamanship of the British enabled their van to over-reach the French rear. At six o'clock Howe signalled his fleet to tack in succession, calculating that, on its new course, his van would at least graze the French rear. But Villaret in turn wore, with the result that both fleets were again running side by side, but nearer each other, and at noon there was distant firing betwixt the leading ships of both lines. At one o'clock Howe again signalled to his ships to tack and break the French line. The leading British ship, the *Cæsar*, failed, however, to obey the signal, and Howe, as an example to his fleet, tacked in the *Queen Charlotte*, and, with all sail set, bore up to the French line. The *Queen Charlotte* ran along the enemy's line under a heavy cannonade, and then, luffing, broke through

the French ships, followed by the *Bellerophon* and the *Leviathan*. Howe had thus, so to speak, amputated the French admiral's tail! He had actually cut off, that is, the last six ships in his line.

But again the French admiral gallantly wore, and his huge flagship, the *Montagne*, leading, came bearing down to rescue his imperilled rear. Howe was inadequately supported: the *Queen Charlotte*, too, a heavy ship, wore so slowly that, while it was being put about, the French ships Howe's manœuvre had cut off drew ahead out of his reach. It added to the difficulty of the British flagship that the heavy sea running came in through the open ports of its lower deck in such quantities that every pump in the ship had to be manned to keep the vessel afloat. The two rear ships of the French line, however, were fiercely engaged by the *Barfleur* and the *Orion*, and one actually struck its flag, but hoisted it again on being remonstrated with by an angry broadside from one of its own consorts. As the result of his manœuvre the French admiral had rescued his disabled ships, but had lost the weather-gage, and Howe had it now in his power to bring on a general engagement.

By this time night was falling, and Howe, the coolest of men, resolved he would keep the weather-gage but postpone the fight till the morning. As he himself said significantly, he would fight in daylight, "so that he might see how his captains behaved."

He had reason for dissatisfaction with some of them, notably with the captain of the *Cæsar*. With the night came on a dense fog, which lasted for thirty-six hours. All night, and all the next day, the two fleets stood slowly to the west, but invisible to each other. Codrington, then a lieutenant on the *Queen Charlotte*, tells how on the morning of the 31st he woke Howe, who was sleeping in a chair, and told him the fog was so thick it was impossible to see ten yards ahead, and added, "God knows whether we are standing into our own fleet or that of the enemy." "It can't be helped," answered Howe with tranquil courage; "we must keep our patience till the weather improves."

Now and again a long lane would open through the fog, and the ghostly image of a great ship would cross it, whether French or English it was hard to tell. The British look-outs, too, perched aloft, would sometimes see over the drifting fog, as across some continent of snow, the limp topsails of a dozen great ships, mere peaks of airy canvas, with no hull visible beneath them. All through the bewildering scene, however, the British clung obstinately to the weather gage, and when the morning of June 1 broke—a Sunday morning, with a clear horizon, an easy sea, and a softly blowing breeze—the French fleet was six miles off and to leeward. A singular stroke of good fortune had happened to the French admiral during the night. Admiral Nielly had

joined him with three line-of-battle ships; a seventy-four had also joined, thus repairing all the losses of the two previous days' fighting, and giving the French a slight superiority over the British.

Howe had now the choice of battle in his hands. He sent his crews to breakfast, dressed his lines so as to pit each British ship against an antagonist of reasonably equal size, and signalled to his captains that each ship was to run down, pass through the enemy's line, and engage its antagonist to leeward. Howe, that is, proposed to win not by tactics, but by sheer hard fighting. He did not, like Nelson at the Nile, propose to double on half the enemy's line and thus crush it with an overwhelming force. It was to be a fight of single ship against single ship. This was pluck, but not generalship. The advantage of fighting to leeward was that, in this way, the enemy's ships could not escape, and the British ships, as they heeled over from the wind, would be able to fight their lower decks without the risk of being flooded.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIGHT OF THE FIRST OF JUNE

AT 9.20 A.M. Howe closed his signal-book with a sigh of satisfaction, and declared to Bowen, his master, that he hoped he would not have to re-open it that day. He had won in the strife of tactics, nothing remained but the plain business of actual fighting. Had Howe's plans been carried out loyally, the spectacle offered by the fight would have been magnificent. The two columns, a twin procession of stately ships, with widespread canvas and tall masts, were four miles apart, the English line, in particular, being so perfect, both for distance and dressing, that it seemed faultless. At a given signal from the peak of the *Queen Charlotte*, every ship in the British line would have swung round before the wind and come bearing down at right angles, with the foam piled high before each stem, upon the French. Each British ship would have swept in a tempest of sound and flame through an interval in the French line, would have borne sharply up to leeward and grappled with its antagonist. Thus, almost at the same moment, from end to end of

the far-stretching line of huge ships, the air would have been filled with the angry tempest of battle.

But Howe's plan was at least partly spoiled, and spoiled from ignoble causes. The leading British ship, the *Cæsar*, instead of pushing forward under all sail till abreast of the leading Frenchman, hesitated and put its main-topsails back. This checked the progress of the whole British line and threw it into confusion. Then, when the signal to bear down and break the enemy's line was made, the *Cæsar*, instead of obeying it, hauled to the wind and opened fire from a distance of 500 yards on its antagonist, and the ships immediately in its rear followed its example. Howe was dissatisfied with the conduct of the *Cæsar* in the fighting of the previous days, and had proposed to remove it from its place of honour at the head of the British line, to some less distinguished position in its rear. But he had yielded to the urgent appeal of his flag-captain, Sir Roger Curtis. As Howe, with Curtis by his side on the quarter-deck of the *Queen Charlotte*, saw the *Cæsar*, with topsails aback, checking the British line, and failing to close resolutely on the enemy, he put his hand on his captain's shoulder and said, "Look, Curtis, there goes your friend. Who is mistaken now?"

Since his leading ship had failed him, Howe took the lead himself. He ran down to the enemy's line, intending to break through it immediately behind

Villaret's flagship, the *Montagne*, a giant of 120 guns, and held to be the finest and most formidable ship flying the French flag. Owing to the check given to the British line by the *Cæsar*, the *Queen Charlotte*, to reach the gap aimed at, had to approach the French line obliquely, and was fired upon by each ship in the enemy's line as it passed. At last the interval at the stern of the *Montagne* was reached, but that vessel threw its sails aback, while the next ship in the French line, the *Jacobin*, dropped its main-sail and moved forward so as to close the interval. Lord Howe, watching the movement, said to his master, Bowen, "There won't be room to get through." "My lord," Bowen answered, "the *Queen Charlotte* will make room for itself!" The *Jacobin*, however, found that her stem would strike the stern of the *Montagne*, and to escape the collision put its helm up, and moved along the lee side of the French flagship. The *Queen Charlotte* at this moment put her helm hard up, the great fabric came slowly round, and commenced to move athwart the stern of the *Montagne*. The representative of the Convention, Jean Bon St. André, whose business it was to keep up the courage of the French fleet to an heroic temperature, was standing at that moment on the *Montagne's* quarter-deck, but the menace of the *Queen Charlotte's* approach, with its tall masts and frowning batteries and iron silence, was so disquieting, that M. Jean Bon St. André's private stock

BATTLE OF THE FIRST OF JUNE, 1794.

BRITISH, 25 SHIPS
FRENCH, 26 SHIPS

References.

+ FRENCH SHIPS CAPTURED
o SHIPS CRIPPLED IN ACTION BY THE LOSS OF SPARS (Figs. 1 & 2)
o " " " " " " " " " " (Fig. 3)
B. THE BRUNSWICK, BRITISH
C. THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE, BRITISH
M. THE MONTAGNE, FRENCH
Q. THE QUEEN, BRITISH
B' B' BRITISH LINE FORMED AFTER ACTION, HEADING E.
F' F' FRENCH " " " " " "
F'' F'' FRENCH LINE OF RETREAT N.W.

WIND S. by W.

Fig. 1. The Approach.

Fig. 2. The Collision.

THE SHIPS THEMSELVES REPRESENT THE POSITIONS AT MOMENT OF COLLISION. THE BROKEN LINES THEIR SUBSEQUENT MOVEMENTS TO FIG. 3.

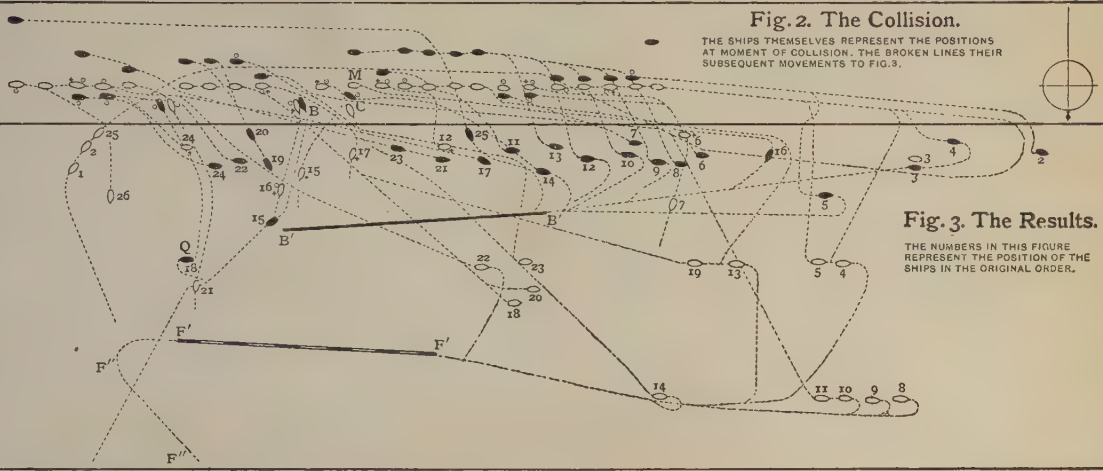


Fig. 3. The Results.

THE NUMBERS IN THIS FIGURE REPRESENT THE POSITION OF THE SHIPS IN THE ORIGINAL ORDER.

Copied by permission from Captain Mahan's work, "The Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution."

Walker & Boutall sc.

of heroism suddenly became bankrupt, and, with all the virtue and authority of the Convention under his cap of liberty, he fled in agitated haste to the secure, if somewhat ignoble, shelter of the cockpit, from which he did not emerge till the battle was over!

Codrington has left a graphic account of the scene. He was one of the lieutenants of the *Queen Charlotte*, and had charge of seven guns on the lower deck. "The ports," says Codrington, "were lowered to prevent the sea washing in. On going through the smoke, I hauled up a port, and could just see it was a French ship we were passing." Codrington was a young lieutenant in his first battle, and was without orders, but the sight of the Frenchman's huge stern was enough for him, and he instantly acted. "I successively hauled up the ports," he says, "and myself fired the whole of my seven weather guns into her, then ran to leeward and fired the lee guns into the other ship. The weather guns bore first as we went through on the slant, therefore I had time for the lee guns." When the ports were lifted the sea broke in, and as the guns were fired the breechings were, in most instances, carried away. But nothing shook Codrington's steady nerve. "In passing under the *Montagne's* stern," he says, "I myself waited at the bow port till I saw the Frenchman's rudder (guns 32-pounders, double-shotted), and then I pulled the trigger, the

same sea splashing us both, and the fly of her ensign brushed our shrouds. I pulled the trigger of the whole seven guns in the same way, as I saw the rudder just about the gunroom ports. On going on deck, Bowen, in answer to my asking if I had done wrong in firing without any immediate orders, said, 'I could have kissed you for it!' Bowen explained, 'In going through, the helm was hard up, and we were thinking we should not clear her, and we quite forgot to send you any orders.'"

As the *Queen Charlotte* came through the French line, the *Jacobin* held the place to leeward of the *Montagne* that Howe wished his flagship to take, and it seemed as if the *Queen Charlotte* would have to go outside both the French ships. Bowen, however, a quick-eyed sailor, saw at that instant, through the whirling eddies of gun-smoke, the great rudder of the *Jacobin* move slowly round, so as to throw that ship farther to leeward. With cool decision, the wheel of the British flagship was whirled round; she came heavily up to the wind, her jib-boom actually scraping the shroud of the *Jacobin* as she swung round in the process, and, like a slowly sliding mountain, she moved into the interval betwixt the two ships. If the *Jacobin* had held her position, the *Queen Charlotte* would have fared badly, with an enemy's ship of 80 guns on one side of her, and one of 120 guns on the other. But the fire of the British flagship was so furious and

destructive that the *Jacobin*, after a couple of broadsides, ran to leeward out of action.

The broadside the *Queen Charlotte* had fired into the *Montagne's* stern was amazingly destructive. It struck down 300 men and broke a gap in the Frenchman's stern big enough, the sailors swore, to drive a waggon through. From out of the huge wound thus made Codrington reports seeing a vast mass of papers fall, as though the entire correspondence of the French fleet was being cast into the sea. That fatal broadside, indeed, seemed to have stunned the *Montagne*, for she fired no gun in answer, even when the *Queen Charlotte*, lying broadside to broadside, was scourging her through every deck with her shot. At last, shattered almost into the condition of a wreck, many of her guns dismounted, and the dead lying thick on all her decks, she moved out of the fire of the *Queen Charlotte*, whose fore-topmast by this time was gone, and so drifted to leeward out of the action. The *Juste*, an 80-gun ship, and the *Republicaine*, of 110 guns, took up the contest with the *Queen Charlotte*, and the fight raged till the *Juste* struck; but by that time the British flagship was herself almost entirely crippled.

The most famous incident in the great fight is the duel betwixt the *Brunswick* and the *Vengeur*, both 74-gun ships. The *Brunswick* drifted into the fight with all the ports on her lower deck strictly

closed, and Harvey, its captain, sent an officer down with orders that not a port was to be lifted, nor a gun fired, until he gave the signal. The officer ran down with the order; the lower deck, with its double line of guns, and every officer and man at his station, was in perfect darkness. Coming out of the glittering sunlight into that worse than Egyptian gloom, the officer could distinguish no one. Standing on the lowest step of the ladder, he called out at the top of his voice that not a gun was to be fired till the word was given. Out of the darkness came in cheerful accents the voice of the lieutenant of the lower deck, "Tell the captain we do not mean to fire till we get the word, and that we are all as happy as princes, singing 'Rule Britannia!'" That men drifting in thick darkness into a desperate fight should be as "happy as princes" is a curious proof of the spirit with which the British seamen of that day fought.

The *Brunswick* was Howe's second astern, and was to have cut through the French line aft of the *Jacobin*. The *Vengeur*, however, moved up, and closed the interval. Whereupon Harvey, the captain of the *Brunswick*, kept his helm a-port; the sides of the two ships ground heavily together, while the starboard anchors of the *Brunswick* caught in the forechains of the *Vengeur*. The master of the *Brunswick* inquired if he should cut the ship clear. "No," said Harvey, "we've got her and we'll

keep her!" Then began one of the fiercest of recorded sea-duels. Both ships drifted to leeward, wrapped in an atmosphere of whirling flame, of sound and smoke. The *Vengeur* was a much bigger ship than the *Brunswick*, and her tall sides completely overshadowed that vessel's decks. She carried 36-pound carronades, too, on her poop, and these, loaded with old nails and pieces of iron, swept the upper deck of the *Brunswick* as with a besom of fire, till scarcely a living figure remained on the upper deck of the British ship. On the lower deck, however, the *Brunswick*, in its turn, established a complete superiority. The *Brunswick* was a wall-sided ship, and as the two great hulls ground together it was found impossible to haul up the nine midship ports; but this difficulty was promptly got over; the guns were fired through the closed ports, shattering fresh ports for themselves!

The curve of their hulls made a little space betwixt the guns of the two ships in the batteries fore and aft, yet they were so near that the men loading the gun at an English port could see the crew of the French gun opposite busy at the same task, and the rival gunners raced furiously to get their gun discharged first. At one particular port a curious incident took place. The men belonging to two guns opposite each other, says an account written by an officer of the *Brunswick*, were striving who should load their gun first. "Our men, by

shouting and gestures, endeavoured to scare the Frenchmen from their object, but without effect, for a man was on the point of putting the cartridge into the gun, when the second captain of our gun, who had been worming the gun, suddenly reversed his rammer, reached over, and twisting the worm into the Frenchman's clothes, hauled him overboard; this decided the business in our favour!"

The *Vengeur's* lower deck, as a matter of fact, was swept with a fire so deadly and swift that the French sailors abandoned their guns. The great ships rolled in the heavy sea by this time running, and the British sailors, with great coolness and skill, followed with their broadsides the rhythm of the sea. They alternately withdrew the coins from their guns, and drove them home; thus one broadside was fired with muzzles depressed so that the shot pierced through the enemy's hull below the water-line, the next broadside was fired with muzzles elevated, so as to rip up the decks.

This murderous combat lasted for no less than three hours. At its fiercest stage a great French 80-gun ship, the *Achille*, was seen through the smoke bearing down on the *Brunswick's* quarter, her riggings and gangways crowded with men ready for boarding. The crews of five guns in action against the *Vengeur* were instantly transferred to the larboard battery, a double-headed shot was added to the already loaded guns, and these opened fire at musket-shot distance

on the slowly approaching Frenchman, and brought down its only remaining mast. The *Achille* actually struck to the *Brunswick*, but that ship, not having a boat that would float, was unable to take possession of its prize.

Meanwhile the two fast-locked combatants maintained their furious struggle. At one moment the *Vengeur*, tempted by the apparently empty upper deck of the *Brunswick*, tried to board, but the British tars swarmed up from the lower decks, and the French boarders were driven back with great slaughter. A quaint illustration of the temper in which British sailors fight is supplied by an incident in this struggle. At the height of the combat, it was discovered that a cannon-shot had carried away the laced cap of the *Brunswick's* figure-head. That the figure-head of their ship should be minus its hat in the presence of a Frenchman shocked the self-respect of the Jacks, and, while the desperate fight raged, a deputation came aft to beg Captain Harvey to lend them a cocked hat to replace the one that had been carried away. Harvey gave them the best hat that he possessed, and the carpenter of the *Brunswick* swung himself out under the jib-boom, while the shot flew fast about him, and solemnly nailed that hat on to the wooden skull of the figure-head!

Harvey himself was already twice wounded, when the fragment of a double-headed shot shattered his

right arm to pieces. He had lost so much blood that he could only stagger across his quarter-deck towards the cockpit. Some seamen ran to support him, but he refused their help. "No man," he said, "must leave his quarters on my account."

About two o'clock the two shattered hulls swung off from each other, the *Vengeur's* shrouds were torn loose from the *Brunswick's* anchors, and for a moment the combat almost ceased from pure exhaustion. The *Ramilies*, commanded by Harvey's brother, had already, as it drifted through the smoke on its way to engage another French ship, tried to assist the *Brunswick;* but it is doubtful whether it actually rendered any practical help. The officer of the *Brunswick* from whose account, published in the *Naval Chronicle*, we have quoted, says the *Ramilies* "sailed round us, but was scarcely able to fire a safe shot. She ranged up a second time on our larboard quarter, and I observed the captain of the *Ramilies* wave his hand for us to get out of the way, to which no regard was or could be paid." It was impossible, in fact, for a third ship to fire on the two entangled and desperately fighting antagonists without injuring both.

The *Vengeur* was now sinking. She hung an English flag over her wrecked bulwarks, and hailed the *Brunswick* for assistance. That ship, however, could give none. Her boats had long since been rent to fragments. The *Vengeur* sank steadily deeper;

with every sullen roll the sea rushed in through the open ports. At six o'clock the boats of the *Culloden* and the *Alfred* came up and took off some 400 of the *Vengeur's* crew, including most of the wounded, but some of the sailors had broken into the spirit-room and were frantically drunk; and the *Vengeur* went down at last, carrying these with her.

From this incident the courageous French imagination extracted the fable of the *Vengeur*, "surrounded by English tigers and leopards, going down, all flags flying," and the entire ship's company occupied in shouting "Vive la liberté et la France." "They chose," the inventive Barrère told the Convention, "rather to be engulphed than to dishonour the Republic by surrender;" and a model of the *Vengeur* was solemnly placed in the Pantheon in record of this heroic incident. As a matter of fact, as many of the *Vengeur's* crew as were sober scrambled into the rescuing English boats, and her captain was peacefully getting his luncheon in one of the cabins of the *Culloden* at the moment his ship sank.

As to the condition of the *Vengeur's* crew, an officer in one of the *Alfred's* boats, which took off the survivors of the sinking Frenchman, had the curiosity to go half-way down the lower-deck ladder of the abandoned ship. The water was then over the orlop deck. There were no crowds of heroic French patriots crying "Vive la Republique." All who could

creep had reached the upper deck. There was no sound but the sullen wash of the sea as the great hull heavily rolled, but in the fast-rising waters drifted scores of the dead.

The *Brunswick* had lost, in killed and wounded, more than one-third of its crew; its masts were gone, every third gun was dismounted. Thrice the shot-rent hull had taken fire. "On going below into the cockpit," says the officer from whose account we have already quoted, "such a scene presented itself as I can never, while I breathe, forget. The whole surface of the deck was covered with wounded men, so closely wedged together, that it was only by placing our feet lengthwise with their bodies that we could cross it. The *Brunswick*, in a word, fought the *Vengeur*, a ship of superior strength to herself, for five hours, and while this duel raged, fought and dismasted another line-of-battle ship, and she survived to reach Portsmouth, where her gallant captain died. On board the *Brunswick*, it may be added, was a French officer, taken prisoner in a captured ship a short time before. A confident, not to say boastful, figure just before the action began, he was ordered below. Before leaving the deck, with a scornful gesture he pointed to the French line of twenty-six huge vessels, and announced that the fate of the English was sealed. When the fight was over he came up again. The *Brunswick* was, indeed, a floating charnel-house, but on the blackened faces

of its crew sat the pride of victory. The stately French line had vanished; in its stead were mastless hulks, prizes to the British, while, growing fainter against the horizon, were the sails of the flying survivors of the French fleet.

At eleven o'clock the tumult of the fighting died away, the smoke blew clear, and the whole landscape of the battle was revealed. To windward lay pell-mell the dismasted French and British ships; to leeward, in two irregular clusters, lay the rest of the two fleets. Eleven British and twelve French ships were dismasted. The French admiral showed great energy and skill. He called by signals all his ships capable of movement round himself, formed a line of twelve vessels, all more or less maimed, and bore down to pick up as many of his dismasted ships as he could. He saved three ships, one of which had actually struck, by running to leeward of them and allowing them to drift into his line. Howe, on the other hand, called his serviceable ships round the *Queen Charlotte*, and the question arose whether he should attack the enemy again, and at least secure all the dismasted ships.

But Howe's best ships were disabled; others, that had sustained less injury, had shown little fighting energy. Howe himself was nearly seventy years of age, and the strain of the previous three days had exhausted him. His captain, Sir Roger Curtis, was alarmed lest the French admiral should attack.

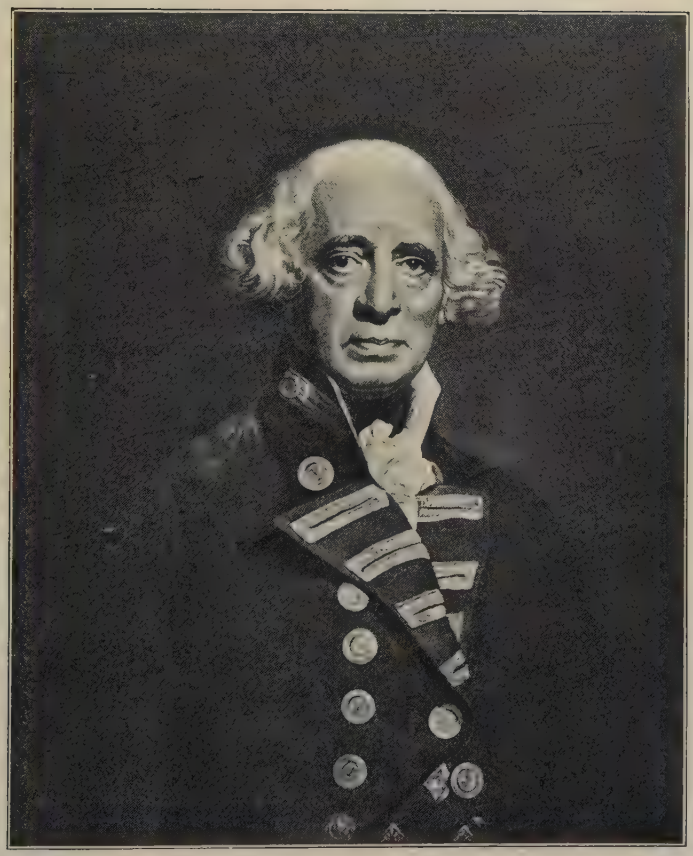
"I declare to God, my lord," he said, "if you don't assemble the fleet they will turn the tables upon us." Howe yielded, and was content to gather up the six prizes within his reach, and show a bold front to the enemy. The French fleet bore away for Brest. Then Howe was helped off his quarter-deck. "We all got round him," says Codrington; "he was so weak that from a roll of the ship he was nearly falling into the waist." "Why, you hold me as if I were a child," he said, good-humouredly.

Howe spent two days securing his prizes, and then crept slowly to Portsmouth, which he reached on June 13. Angelo, in his "Reminiscences," tells how he saw the British fleet, with its prizes, come into harbour. He went on board the captured *Sans Pareil;* the masts were gone, the decks raked and torn with shot like a field furrowed by the plough; the wretched crew—many mere hobnailed peasants, some only boys—were lying wounded in crowds. A huge hogshead was still standing which had been filled with spirits before the fight, so as to inflame the courage of the crew. On visiting the *Queen Charlotte,* he found the ship in perfect order, "the decks as white and clean as any one would find in his own house after the usual scouring." In the British ships, he notes, "only water was allowed the sailors during the action."

Meanwhile the great American convoy, the prize for which this sea-battle was fought, kept peacefully

on its course. It crossed the very scene of the fight, and the admiral in charge, from the floating wreckage he saw, judged that a great battle had been fought, and guessed that the British, even if victorious, would be too shattered for pursuit. So with cool judgment he kept on his course, and reached Brest in safety. Thus the strategetic object of Lord Howe's cruise was missed. Villaret himself, years afterwards, said that he "consented" to the fight on June 1, knowing that the battle, whatever its result, would make the convoy safe. "What did I care," he said, "for half-a-dozen rotten old hulks which you took? While your admiral amused himself with refitting these, I saved my convoy, and I saved my own head!" But this was only the French admiral's way of minimising his own defeat. The moral gain of the victory to Great Britain was great. It raised the prestige of her fleets, which had suffered sorely in the last great war. It gave new courage to her allies; it added a fresh note of confidence and pride to the policy of Great Britain, and it furnished a happy augury for the stormy years to come.

Howe, the hero of this great sea-fight, was ungainly in person, harsh in feature, of an inky complexion, and shy and smileless in manner. He was known through all the forecastles of his fleet as "Black Dick," and he is accused of possessing in ample measure "the sullen family gloom" of the



EARL HOWE

From a mezzotint after the portrait by J. S. Copley, R.A.

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Howes. But Howe's face was no true reflex of his character. A serene, if somewhat inarticulate, good temper marked him. He was humane in an age much given to brutality. He had no vanity and no selfish ambitions. Duty weighed more with Howe than any shining rewards. His courage had no gleam of fire in it and no touch of swagger; it was simple and unaffected, with a coolness as of ice, but with a temper as of hardened steel. Howe, in a word, belonged to a type which is the characteristic product of the English-speaking race, the type to which love of country is a piety and duty a peremptory law; which lacks, perhaps, the heroic air but not the heroic spirit; which can do great things, but cannot talk about them.

The First of June is the one shining, if barren, victory won by England in this, the first stage of the Great War. The campaign in Flanders was an ignoble and bloody failure; Toulon a happy chance thrown away by mere slow-brained neglect; Corsica an irrelevant and absurd adventure, with a fittingly absurd conclusion. On the other hand, France, when the war had lasted only a little over two years, was triumphant on every frontier. The Continental Powers, with the exception of Austria, were eagerly making terms with her. And over Great Britain, abandoned by her allies and perplexed with strange domestic troubles, the skies were black with evil omens.

PERIOD II

THE HOUR OF ENGLAND'S PERIL

PERIOD II.—THE HOUR OF ENGLAND'S PERIL

(From the Establishment of the Directory, October 1795, to the Treaty of Campo Formio, October 17, 1797.)

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1796.	Mar.	Hoche in La Vendée.
	,, 8.	Bonaparte assumes command of Army of Italy.
	April.	Capture of Dutch settlements (Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice) by British.
	,, 12.	Montenotte.
	May 10.	Lodi.
	,, 26.	Capture of St. Vincent by British.
	June 26.	Napoleon's descent on Leghorn.
	Aug. 5.	Treaty of Berlin (betwixt Russia and France).
	,, 19.	Alliance between France and Spain.
	Sept. 4.	French descent on Newfoundland.
	Oct. 6.	Spain declares war against England.
	,, 22.	England makes overtures of peace.
	Nov. 2.	Corsica evacuated by British.
	,, 11.	Jervis withdraws from Mediterranean.
	,, 15.	Arcola.
	Dec. 16.	Hoche sets sail for Bantry Bay.
1797.	Jan. 15.	Rivoli.
	,, 21.	Surrender of Mantua.
	Feb.	Tate and the Légion Noire.
	,, 14.	Victory of Cape St. Vincent.
	,, 17.	Capture of Trinidad by Abercromby.
	April 15.	Mutiny of Channel Fleet at Spithead.

1797. April 18. Peace of Leoben (betwixt Austria and France).
May 12. Mutiny at the Nore.
June 15. Collapse of mutiny.
July 9. Death of Edmund Burke.
,, 24. Nelson at Teneriffe.
Sept. Mutiny at Cadiz—Fructidor, Paris.
Oct. 11. Duncan's victory at Camperdown.
,, 17. Treaty of Campo Formio between France and Austria.
Dec. 9. Congress of Radstadt.

PERIOD II

THE HOUR OF ENGLAND'S PERIL

CHAPTER I

A CATALOGUE OF DANGERS

WITH the break-up of the first coalition the struggle with France takes a new aspect, and one full of menace to England. Perhaps, indeed, the interval betwixt the return of the broken fragments of the British army from the Low Countries and the peace of Campo Formio, which cost Great Britain her last ally, represents the darkest hour in the national fortunes. In that period Great Britain saw her own shores threatened with invasion, her fleets in mutiny, and Ireland lit with the flames of civil war. Famine brooded over her cities. The harvests still failed. The chief banks were tumbling into insolvency. Mutiny, invasion, civil war, famine, bankruptcy—what worse evils could threaten national existence?

The mere almanac of the period is the most expressive proof of the fast-following perils which arose in turn to menace England. On December 15, 1796, a French fleet, with 16,000 troops on board, was anchored in Bantry Bay, and Ireland, fermenting

with the passion of revolt, was eager to welcome the invaders. Six weeks later, on February 22, 1797, Colonel Tate and the Legion Noire actually landed in England with the design of burning Bristol. In the same month the Bank of England suspended payment. In April both the Channel and the North Sea fleets were in open mutiny; through June the Thames was blockaded by the mutineers. On May 23, 1798, the Irish rebellion broke out, and on June 28 Vinegar Hill was fought. On August 22 another French invading force under Humbert landed at Killala. On September 16 Napper Tandy landed at Rutland Island; and on the same day a powerful French squadron under Bompart sailed from Brest bent on the invasion of England. Four times, that is, within less than two years, England was threatened with invasion; thrice her own fleets broke out into open mutiny; twice the flames of civil war were kindled. For seven years lean harvests had cursed the fields. And over this whole gloomy landscape of civil strife, revolting fleets, invading enemies, and Europe leagued to overthrow the national existence, brooded the black shadow of national bankruptcy. Where else does history show the spectacle of a nation threatened within a space so brief by perils so deadly, and yet surviving them all?

At the close of 1795, England, instead of being able to weave half Europe into a coalition against France, found a great coalition arrayed against her-

self. Austria alone remained as her ally, and her chilly, uncertain alliance was purchased by a subsidy of four and a half millions. Sardinia, though still in name the ally of England, was something less than a cypher—if that were possible—in the political arithmetic of the period. On the other hand, Holland and Spain had joined hands with France, Holland bringing a great fleet of thirty ships of war to the help of French plans, and Spain one of equal, if not greater, strength. This new league against England rivalled in naval strength that which had humbled her at the close of the American war, and it completely changed the aspect of the naval campaign. Yet England emerged undestroyed! If she did not owe much to the genius of her statesmen or the skill of her generals, yet the vast resources of her wealth, the dogged endurance of her people, the skill and daring of her seamen, enabled her to face and overcome every peril in turn.

England had now to blockade not merely Brest and Toulon and Ferrol, but Cadiz, the Texel, and Cartagena. She had to maintain, that is, six fleets instead of three; if she lost for twenty-four hours the command of the Channel, the armies which had overrun Holland, and were now marching as conquerors through Italy and half Germany, might land on the shores of Kent and march on London. A new audacity and genius, too, burned in the military plans of the Republic. The flames of revolt had been trampled out in France itself. Toulon had been

recaptured; the attempt of the emigrants to land in Quiberon had ended in massacre. Robespierre had sent to the guillotine both the Hebertists—the wildly atheistic wing of the Jacobins—and the Dantonists, the party that to loose morals added a careless humanity that shrank from, at all events, new massacres. And under Robespierre's austere and half-crazy fanaticism the lunacy of the Terror had reached its climax. Cruelty grew ice-cold as well as steel-edged. It was made more hideous by a piety of its own invention. It established the worship of Reason in Notre-Dame, with Robespierre himself, "the sea-green incorruptible," as high priest.

But the Revolution was now devouring its own offspring. Robespierre's head at last fell under the blade of that guillotine to which he had sent so many tumbril-loads of victims. The Club of the Jacobins was dissolved; the Commune was destroyed; the Revolutionary Tribunal, saturated in blood, vanished. The infamous Fouquier-Tinville himself took his place in one final "batch" destined for the guillotine, most of his infamous jurymen keeping him company. Carrière, of the "Nantes noyades," who guillotined little children, drowned whole barge-loads of priests, and invented "Republican marriages"—naked men and women tied together and flung to drown in the Loire—Carrière himself made his unwept exit from the world under the shear of the guillotine. Sanity, in a word, resumed its authority in France, with the result that

a new unity and method became visible in its administration of the war.

France was now under the Directory, and the black eclipse of the Terror was passing away. The passion for foreign conquest had awakened. Carnot's strategy found a new field for its display, and new instruments for its execution. Three armies crossed the French frontiers on purposes of invasion. They had a common objective, Vienna. One moved by the Danube, a second by the Main, a third by the Po. Jourdan led the army of the Sambre and the Meuse, Moreau the army of the Rhine, and Bonaparte the army of Italy. Bonaparte had risen fast since he commanded the batteries on the heights above Toulon. When the Parisian Sections rose against the Directory, Barras put the defence of the Assembly in the hands of his protégé, Bonaparte. He showed characteristic energy and skill, and his historic "whiff of grape-shot" blew sans-culottism, the sacred right of insurrection, and the reign of the guillotine into mere vapour. For this his reward was the command of the army in Italy, with all its glittering, but as yet undreamed-of results.

The Directory could only reach England across the sea; but as it now controlled the navies of three nations, it formed the plan of concentrating these into a fleet of overwhelming strength, seizing the narrow seas, and striking at England through her most vulnerable spot, Ireland.

Pitt meanwhile was anxious to bring the war to a close. His natural love of peace urged him in this direction. The financial troubles of England, the political discontents of Ireland, and the secret knowledge Pitt possessed of the contemplated French descent upon Irish shores, all made the English Minister eager to bring the struggle to a close. The emergence of a stable and reasonably humane Government in France, it may be added, seemed to make peace possible. The "red fool-fury of the Seine" was gone. Thrice during this period of the struggle Pitt made offers of peace to France. In March 1796 he used the Swiss Minister as his intermediary. Later in the same year Lord Malmesbury was despatched to Paris on the same business. Pitt offered to surrender to France and her allies all the colonial conquests of England as the price of peace. The terms would have given back the Cape to Holland, Martinique and Saint Lucie to France, and would have left the Republic the Rhine as an eastern frontier. The one point Pitt could not, as a question of honour, yield, was the surrender of the Austrian possessions in the Netherlands. This would have been on his part the betrayal of an ally; though Austria itself, at a later stage, consented to the very surrender that Pitt refused to make. The negotiation lasted some months, and was ended by Lord Malmesbury receiving abrupt notice to leave Paris in eighteen hours.

France, as a matter of fact, was fermenting with pride bred of its recent victories. The Directory had vast resources at its command for the contemplated overthrow of England, and its plans were perhaps even more spacious than its resources. Its strategy was magnificent. The Dutch fleet of thirty ships of the line at the Texel was to break out, sweep through the Channel, join a French fleet of forty ships at Brest, take on board a French army of 25,000 men under Hoche—a fit leader for a great task—and then, a stately armada of not less than seventy line-of-battle ships, it would bear down on the shores of Ireland. The Directory was at this moment listening with charmed ears to Wolfe Tone's proposals for an invasion of Ireland. French eyes were dazzled with visions of a subjugated England and a prostrate Europe. With France in such a mood, it was vain for England to ask for peace.

Yet she asked again in 1797, when the surrender of the Low Countries by Austria, as a preliminary to the treaty of Campo Formio, had removed what had hitherto been England's chief difficulty in the way of peace. Lord Malmesbury was once more despatched to negotiate terms. But the Directory in September 1797 was rent by strife amongst its own members. Barras was busy with a plot for the suppression of the other members of the Directorate, Carnot himself being amongst the persons arrested, and there was no one to listen to Malmesbury's proposals. These

thrice-repeated offers of peace at least prove that Great Britain had no wish for a life-and-death conflict with Revolutionary France.

It is a curious fact, showing the moral quality of French politicians of that period, that Lord Malmesbury had no sooner started on his return to London, and the negotiations at Lille were definitely ended, than Pitt received a secret communication on behalf of Barras, offering peace on his own terms, if a sufficient bribe—no less than £2,000,000 sterling—could be provided for Barras himself and his friends! Pitt reported the offer in a letter to the king, and received his assent to these subterranean and ignoble negotiations. But Pitt was frugal. He would buy Barras, but not at the vain Frenchman's own price. Barras's agent was told that the English Government would not be unwilling to undertake for the payment of £450,000, if the conditions were satisfactory and the transaction could be kept secret. These negotiations ultimately failed; that they should have begun, and begun on the French side, sufficiently marks the moral temper of the cluster of politicians which at that moment constituted the French Directory.

The warlike expenditure of Great Britain at this moment was at the rate of £42,000,000 per annum; the funds had fallen as low as £53. But Pitt announced a new loan of £18,000,000, and appealed to the loyalty of the kingdom for its success. The whole sum was subscribed in less than

twenty-four hours! How great was the financial strain upon England can hardly be realised. Betwixt February 1, 1793, and March 17, 1801—during less than the first half of the war, that is—the public debt had been increased by nearly £300,000,000 sterling. The stream of subsidies to foreign powers was constant and ever-deepening. No wonder that under the strain of such burdens the financial stability of the kingdom was shaken. On February 20, 1797, the Bank of England itself had exhausted its resources in cash. To protect its credit the Bank contracted its note issue. Notes became almost as scarce as gold; the rate of interest rose to 17 per cent.; the cash in the Bank's coffers shrank to a little over £1,000,000. On February 25 the country was within forty-eight hours of bankruptcy. An urgency proclamation was issued suspending cash payments, and an Act of Parliament passed, and continued for twenty-two years, making Bank of England notes a legal tender for all sums over twenty shillings.

But not the least deadly and threatening of the perils which menaced Great Britain in those sad years was that arising from civil discontent within her own boundaries. Ireland, with a population of 7,000,000—exceeding, in fact, that of Switzerland or of Holland—was a mere witch's brew, compounded of the most deadly ingredients; of oppression, of plots, of disloyalty, of secret societies, of furious hatreds—hatreds bred of a bitter history, and hatreds yet more furious

born of hostile creeds. Lord Hutchinson analysed the constituent elements of the Ireland of that day and expressed the result in one terrible formula: "A corrupt aristocracy, a ferocious commonalty, a distracted Government, a divided people." Gregory, in a letter written at the time, said, "The mass of the people require no organisation, being perfectly ready to join any force that may land." Rebellion, that is, was their normal attitude; they were eager to welcome any invader. Perhaps in the cooler air and the clearer perspective which time, by its mere flight, creates, these statements may be generously discounted. They certainly err by the over-emphasis natural to the period in which they were written. But about the elements of disorder and peril which Ireland contributed to the national life at the end of the last century there is no doubt.

Grattan's Parliament had been in existence since 1782, but every third man in it was a pensioner or a place-man, and it would be difficult to find in history a more corrupt and absurd Legislature. It was a Parliament of eloquent speeches and of shameful jobs. It was itself the symbol of the supremacy of a class. Ireland under Grattan's Parliament, it is customary to say, enjoyed its independence; but its "independence," to quote Green, "was a mere name for the unchecked rule of a cluster of great families;" an oligarchy as narrow, and as despotic, as anything Venice ever knew. It

had almost every vice a Parliament could possess. It was the Parliament of a minority and of a class; it represented all the worst ideas of Protestant "ascendancy." No Catholic could sit in it or vote for it. In the short eighteen years of its existence it passed some fifty Coercion Acts and inspired at least one bloody rebellion. It was on the point once of beginning war with Portugal on its own account, and it waged a constitutional struggle with England over the question of the Regency, which would probably have ended in civil war but for the recovery of George III. Of that particular Parliament, Wolfe Tone, after surveying all existing Parliaments, says, "Beyond all comparison the most shamelessly profligate, and abandoned by all sense of virtue, principle, or even common decency, was the Legislature of my own unfortunate country. The scoundrels! I lose my temper every time I think of them." It was this Parliament which rejected the first great healing measure which Pitt proposed when he assumed office—the bill for creating commercial equality betwixt England and Ireland.

No wonder that under such a Parliament, and all such a Parliament represented, new gall was poured into every existing element of discontent. Still less is it to be wondered at that, on the Ireland of that day, the Revolution which filled France with its tumult and passion, its dramatic and swift-following incidents, exercised the profoundest in-

fluence. How powerfully the Revolutionary movement in France affected the Irish imagination is told in a hundred ways. In the revolt which broke out on May 23, 1798, the revolters styled their government a "Directory;" they addressed each other as "Citizens;" they copied not only the terminology of the Revolution, but its ferocity, and the worst deeds of the September massacres were emulated in the camp at Vinegar Hill and in the streets of Wexford.

In 1791 the Society of United Irishmen was founded, in which it was attempted to combine the stern and dogged Protestantism of the north, fermenting with a passion for republican ideas, and the fiery Catholic population of the south, burning with the memory of historic wrongs, and with a sense of the intolerable injustice and oppression under which they still suffered. The Society found an organising genius in Wolfe Tone, and for a time it attained great scale and power. It was made up of a web of tiny societies, in none of which the membership exceeded eighteen—each society being, in fact, a self-contained cell—grouped together into district committees, provincial directories, and ending in an executive directory of five, elected secretly, and known to none but the secretaries of each province, who counted the votes in their respective provinces.

But the passions bred of historic feuds, of race

hatreds, and of religious differences, acted as a solvent on the Irish themselves. The Protestants of Ulster, in brief, hated the Pope more than they hated the British Government; and the Catholics of the south felt it to be a darker element in the guilt of their oppressors that they were Protestants than even that they were Saxons. How profoundly what they called their "religion" divided the two wings of the United Irishmen was shown by what is known as "the battle of the Diamond," an exasperated fight betwixt Catholics and Protestants at the little village of Diamond in Armagh. When the rebellion broke out at Wexford in May, its Protestant inhabitants were massacred or thrown into prison by the rebels. The rebellion, that is, took the complexion at once of a religious war; and the stern Ulster Protestants, who formed the strength of the United Irishmen, drew sullenly aloof from allies whose hands were red with Protestant blood. The United Irishmen thus were broken into fatal and hopeless discord by their religious hatreds. It should be added, too, that the Catholics themselves were shocked and repelled by the later developments of the French Revolution. A political movement which seemed to be inspired by atheism, which sent priests to the guillotine, and set up the Goddess of Reason in Notre-Dame, both startled the imagination and alarmed the conscience of Roman Catholics.

The sense of the peril to England which was created by the Irish discontent of the period lay like a nightmare on the statesmanlike brain of Pitt. It drove him to undertake, and carry out, by methods which, judged by the better-instructed political ethics of to-day, seem so dubious, the union of England and Ireland. The union, it may be added, whatever its merits or demerits, had the immediate effect of thrusting Pitt himself from office; but this was done, not by the union struggle itself, but by an absurd and incidental dispute arising out of it. What the shock of a great conflict, the passion of great debates, and the attacks of mighty opponents had not accomplished, was brought about by a set of irrational "scruples" in the conscience of a semi-lunatic monarch.

The union, in Pitt's statesmanship, was but part of a great scheme for the reconciliation of England and Ireland. Since Ireland was now under the same political constitution as Great Britain, Pitt proposed to extend to it an equality of political rights. The last trace of political disabilities must be removed from both Catholics and Dissenters. But the conscience of George III., or what he called his "conscience," stood in the road of that wise and just reform. England has suffered much at various times from a defect of conscience in its rulers; it now suffered a disastrous calamity owing to an excess of that useful moral quality in its sovereign.

The king had persuaded himself—or other people had thrust the idea into the cells of his disordered brain—that to attach his royal signature to a bill which gave political equality to Roman Catholics would inflict a mortal injury on his coronation oath. He perused that sacred document until he became perfectly muddled over it. He read it to everybody about him in turn, and demanded their exposition of it. Famous lawyers and learned ecclesiastics advised his Majesty that his coronation oath would be quite uninjured by the measures Pitt proposed; but the king insisted upon being the keeper of his own puzzled conscience. Malmesbury in his "Diary" records that the king read his coronation oath to his assembled family, asked them whether they understood it, and added, "If I violate it, I am no longer legal sovereign of this country, but it falls to the House of Savoy." The agitated monarch would hand his coronation oath to some member of his household, and bid him read it aloud that he might judge how it sounded. After one such experiment he broke out into passionate exclamations, and vowed that he would rather beg his bread from door to door throughout Europe than consent to any such measure as that Pitt contemplated.

Pitt knew the king to be utterly inaccessible to reason on this subject, but believed he would yield to direct pressure. He had no personal interview with him on the contemplated reforms, but

addressed to him a formal letter describing the measures he proposed to bring in, and added that if he could not bring these forward with the king's full concurrence, he must resign. George III. was probably not unwilling to escape from the yoke of Pitt's firm will, and he at once sent for Addington. Fox had been Pitt's unyielding and mighty antagonist, but when he heard the tidings, he wrote to Lord Holland, "Addington Chancellor of the Exchequer against Pitt! If I do believe it, it must be *quia* incomprehensible." So England, in the darkest hour of its fortunes, lost the service of the wisest brain and the strongest will in English statesmanship.

The great peril to England arising from the condition of Ireland lay, of course, in the opportunity it offered to France. The leaders of Irish discontent themselves made a direct appeal to the Republic for assistance. Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald in 1796 negotiated at Basle with the representatives of the French Government for a French descent upon Ireland, and Lord Edward, with characteristic recklessness, on his journey back from Basle, communicated the whole plan to a fellow-passenger, who happened to be a secret agent of the English Government. Wolfe Tone, who had rare gifts of persuasive speech, convinced the Directory at Paris that the landing of a French invading force would be the signal for the instant and universal revolt

of Ireland; and the prospect of thus inflicting a fatal wound on the greatest and most powerful of their foes proved irresistible to the French Government. The British forces in Ireland at that moment numbered 10,000, made up of invalids and Fencibles; and Wolfe Tone assured the French Directory that the United Irishmen counted 200,000 men, with pikes and muskets sufficient for 150,000, ready to rise at a signal. And Wolfe Tone's arithmetic had an uncomfortable amount of reality about it. When Lord Lake disarmed Ulster, he actually captured 50,000 muskets, 72 cannon, and 70,000 pikes.

To the French Directory everything seemed to promise success. Three great fleets, at Brest, at the Texel, and at Cadiz, counting more than seventy ships of the line, were at their disposal; it was only necessary to combine these and a mightier armada than that of Philip II. in 1588, and one, it was hoped, destined to happier fortunes, would sweep through the Channel, and make the landing of an invading force on either Irish or English soil perfectly safe. They could not foresee how Jervis at Cape St. Vincent, and Duncan at Camperdown, would wreck in detail that mighty combination of hostile fleets. If the command of the sea were but assured, the military strength of France seemed to promise a triumph at once swift and certain. On November 5, immediately after the failure of the

peace negotiations at Lisle, the Directory issued a proclamation announcing the approaching invasion and conquest of the British Isles. The victorious army of Italy was transformed into "the Army of England," and Bonaparte, already recognised as the greatest soldier of the Republic, and with all the glories of his Italian campaign playing about his head, was to lead his veterans to the overthrow of England.

Bonaparte, however, though he directed the early preparations for the proposed expedition, mistrusted Irish rhetoric. He was unwilling to risk his fortunes in an adventure so desperate while the naval strength of England guarded the narrow seas. The remote and gorgeous East tempted him more than sordid, distracted, and perilous Ireland. "To make a descent upon England without being master of the sea," he wrote to the Directory on February 23, 1798, "is the boldest and most difficult operation ever attempted." There were but three ways, he said, of striking at England: by direct invasion; by a march upon Hanover or Hamburg; or by an expedition to the Levant; and he persuaded a not unreluctant Directory to despatch him to make a descent upon Egypt. On May 19, 1798, with an army 36,000 strong, and escorted by thirty ships of war, Bonaparte sailed on that adventure. But let it be imagined what would have been the effect on the fortunes of England if Ireland, instead of Egypt,

had been the objective of that great armament! The business of a descent upon Ireland or upon England was left to meaner instruments, to Hoche, to Humbert, to Tate, and to Napper Tandy, and the story of these descents makes a curious chapter in the warfare of that day.

CHAPTER II

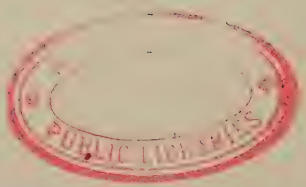
FRENCH DESCENTS

IN the interval betwixt December 1796 and October 1798—within less than two years, that is—are to be counted no less than six attempted invasions of England or of Ireland: that of Hoche, on December 16, 1796, at Bantry Bay; that of Tate and his Legion Noire, at Ilfracombe in February 1797; Humbert's landing at Killala Bay, August 22, 1798; Napper Tandy's invasion of Rutland Island in September 1798; Bompart's expedition from Brest on September 16, 1798; and Savary's expedition to Killala Bay in support of Humbert on October 27, 1798. Some of these attempted invasions resembled buccaneering expeditions, or mere performances in opera bouffe; but others were on a great scale, and charged with real peril to England. It will be of interest to group and describe them together in one connected narrative.

Hoche's expedition is by far the most formidable in this list. A great fleet numbering sixteen ships of the line, twenty frigates and corvettes, and many transports, was assembled at Brest. The land forces

GENERAL HOCHE

From an engraving after the painting by ARY SCHEFFER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consisted of 18,000 good troops under experienced generals, with Hoche as commander-in-chief, and Grouchy—who afterwards played so unhappy a part for France in the Waterloo campaign—as second in command. Hoche was a soldier only inferior to Bonaparte himself in genius and fame. He had suppressed the rising in La Vendée with great energy and skill, and thought he saw in Ireland a field on which he might reap more shining laurels than even those Bonaparte had gained in Italy. Hoche's sanguine expectations were subtly flattered by Irish agents, chief amongst whom was the gifted but ill-fated Wolfe Tone. Irish facts, when planted in French imaginations, are naturally of tropical growth. The invasion of England has very discouraging historical precedents against it. For six centuries no invader had succeeded without having in advance half the population of England on his side. But the Directory believed this good fortune was already theirs. Before Hoche sailed he was assured that the Irish had risen; the arsenals in Dublin were in their hands; British troops were flying in terror across the Channel. The French Government gravely inquired of Wolfe Tone whether it was likely that the Irish Lord Chancellor would join the French when they landed! Bantry Bay was chosen as the point of invasion, and everything seemed ready for action.

There was, however, a procession of exasperated delays, and much distracted confusion, before the

expedition could get itself started; and Wolfe Tone, who had a very pretty gift in expletives, records with much picturesque blasphemy his wrath at the long pause in affairs. First they must wait for the arrival of the Spanish fleet, which, after the usual Spanish fashion, failed to arrive, and over which Wolfe Tone breathes the gentle aspiration, "Sempiternally damn them!" When the loitering Spaniards did sail it was only to meet disaster under the guns of Jervis at Cape St. Vincent, as will be told in due course. At last, tired of waiting for allies who failed to arrive, the Directory ordered its own fleet to put to sea.

The embarkation began on November 17, but was conducted so tediously that it did not get itself completed until December 4, and the anchors were not weighed till December 15. Then, at last, with a favouring wind, but with much tumult and confusion, the ships came—a huge flock of bellying sails—down the three miles of the narrow Goulet passage to Camaret Bay, where it anchored and made a new meditative pause. The adventure was, no doubt, one of extraordinary peril. The fleet had to cross one of the stormiest of seas in the stormiest of seasons; it had to evade or defeat hostile fleets of greater strength than itself; it had to effect a landing on a hostile shore. But never was an expedition more favoured—at its start, at least—alike by fortune and by the stupidity of its enemies.

The wind blew fresh and favouring across the

narrow stretch of sea betwixt Brest and Bantry Bay. Two English fleets were assigned to the task of defeating the French expedition. One was to intercept it at its start from Brest, the other to fight it on its arrival at Bantry Bay. But both were, by blunders in strategy, or stress of weather, placed where effective action was impossible. Fifteen ships of the line under Admiral Colpoys were cruising off Ushant, ready to dash at the Frenchmen directly they showed outside Brest; but the gales had blown Colpoys and his ships fifty miles to the west of Ushant, and the admiral only heard that the Brest fleet had sailed seven days after that event had happened. He could not decide in which quarter to search for it, and, after a bewildered pause, ran for Spithead, which he reached on December 31, a week after the arrival of the French ships at Bantry Bay.

Bridport, with another powerful squadron, was lying at Spithead; the news that Hoche's expedition had started on December 15 reached him on December 21. He had nothing of Nelson's fire or of Jervis's stern energy, and announced that he would "be ready to sail in four days." A contrary wind aided his loitering indolence, and he only succeeded in sailing from Portsmouth on January 3, 1797, just as the last French ship, that is, was sailing *from* Bantry Bay! Hoche's expedition thus had an almost absolutely clear field afforded it by Colpoys and Bridport. As far as the English fleets were

concerned, it was as though the enemy's ships were clothed in some magic robe of invisibility. They were neither sighted nor pursued. During the three or four weeks the French ships were traversing in every direction the Irish and English Channels, says James, in his "Naval History," neither of the two British fleets appointed to look after them succeeded in capturing a single ship.

And yet, curious to relate, it was the mere imagination or ghost of the English fleet, assisted by the performance of a single frigate, the *Indefatigable*, under Captain Pellew, which harried the French expedition through its entire course, and mainly contributed to its failure. That Colpoys' squadron, with its tall sails and frowning batteries, was waiting to swoop down upon the expedition the moment it emerged from the shelter of Brest, was the fixed idea of the French leaders. So, although the wind blew fair for Bantry Bay, and the run across was only some 400 miles, Admiral Morard de Galles, who commanded the French fleet, instead of steering for the open sea, poured the confused mass of his ships through the dangerous channel of the Raz de Sein. The strait is narrow, sown thick with rocks, and dangerous for a single ship in daylight; and De Galles was making the lunatic attempt to carry a tangled swarm of over-crowded ships through it at night-time, and with an uncertain wind.

Just as night was falling the peril of his tactics

dawned on the mind of the French admiral, and he made frantic signals to his ships to keep to the open passage to the W.S.W. But it was now night, and the new signal was seen by only half the ships of the fleet. These obeyed the admiral's signal, but the other half by this time were crowding in a disorderly cluster into the Raz de Sein. The confusion gave to Pellew in the *Indefatigable* a great opportunity, of which he availed himself with matchless audacity. He was in command of the frigates acting as Colpoys' look-outs before Brest. When he saw the great fleet coming out, he despatched one frigate to carry the news to his own admiral off Ushant; a second to warn Bridport at Spithead, while he himself, with another frigate, hung on the flanks of the French fleet and worried it as a dog might worry a flock of sheep. His ship, as it happened, had been taken from the French, and still had many French characteristics of rig and cut. Trusting to this disguise, and to the darkness of the night, Pellew actually ran into the Raz de Sein with the French fleet, and by a diligent expenditure of irrelevant rockets and mystifying blue lights, and a fusillade of what the distracted French imagined to be imperative signal guns, added to the confusion of the wild night scene. One French seventy-four struck a reef and sank, with great loss of life; and when morning dawned, the expedition was broken up into two straggling and

dissevered fragments; and each, agitated by the dread of British pursuit, pushed on its independent course.

On the 18th a fog lay on the sea, blotting out everything. The 19th was a calm — what the Spaniards call "a furious calm"—a rolling sea, but no wind; and Wolfe Tone's journal is lurid with blasphemy on the subject. On the 19th the two sections of the French fleet came in sight of each other, but the frigate which carried both the admiral and the commander-in-chief was missing. "I believe," writes Tone, in a wrath too deep even for expletives, "it was the first instance of an admiral in a clean frigate, with moderate weather and moonlight nights, parting company with his fleet." Bouvet, however, the admiral next in command, pushed on, and on December 21, Cape Clear was in sight, and out of 43 ships which had left Brest, 37 were within signalling distance of each other.

On the 22nd the fleet was within twelve miles of the head of Bantry Bay, but the wind by this time was blowing stiffly from the east. The French fleet could only reach the bay by beating up through thirty miles of narrow waters. Only that winding ribbon of angry sea stretched betwixt them and success; but the task was too much alike for French ships and French seamanship. "I believe," wrote Wolfe Tone, "that we have made 300 tacks, and have not gained 100 yards in a straight line." An

average gain of twelve inches each time a great ship went about was, indeed, slow progress, and Tone can only do justice to his emotions by recording in his journal the syllables, "d—— it, d—— it!" We have but to imagine, too, the whole thirty-five ships, tacking with clumsy slowness at all angles, and crossing each others' courses for two whole days in the narrow channel that leads to Bantry Bay, to picture the scene—the confusion, the collisions, the frantic signalling, the shrill French expletives.

Some twelve ships succeeded in reaching the Bay, twenty were blown away over the horizon, and never reappeared. The wind blew yet more furiously, the skies were low and black with clouds, the bitter air was full of flying snowflakes, and one French ship after another dragged its anchors. On the 27th, only six line-of-battle ships and four transports remained. But the wind by this time had fallen, and a landing was possible. Grouchy had to decide whether the attempt should be made. He had 4000 troops, but no guns, and the task of invading Ireland with such a force was too much for the melancholy Grouchy's nerve. Here, in short, was an army without a general, and a general without an army; an admiral in pursuit of his missing fleet, and an amazed fleet staring round the horizon trying to discover its admiral! It was true the scattered squadron might reassemble, and the frigate

with the missing general and admiral might, at any moment, make its appearance. But Grouchy lacked the iron will necessary for holding on in such straits, and the squadron slipped its anchors and sailed for Brest, which it reached on January 12, where the missing ships of the squadron had arrived nearly a fortnight before.

The adventures of Hoche and Admiral Morard de Galles in the *Fraternité* were of a very agitated character. This frigate, having lost its fleet, was pursuing its lonely and melancholy course to Bantry Bay, but fell in with a hostile sail on December 24, and escaped by dint of jettisoning its stores and part of its guns. On the 29th the frigate sighted two ships of the missing fleet, one in the very act of sinking, the other almost dismantled, and engaged in the operation of taking on board its sinking consort's crew. This spectacle was discouraging, and, combined with shortness of provisions, determined the two commanders to abandon the attempt to reach Ireland. On January 13 the *Fraternité*, with the admiral and the commander-in-chief on board, reached Rochefort, and never did two leaders make a more melancholy return. They had lost both army and fleet, and had never so much as sighted Ireland! The main body of the expedition, however, had achieved an extraordinary feat. It had crossed and recrossed the Channel, and hung for more than a week in the teeth of a gale off the Irish coast,

and had never caught a glimpse of a British line-of-battle ship!

The remaining French ships, one after another, storm-battered and half wrecked, crept back to Brest with a total loss of seven captured by the British, and five wrecked or destroyed by their own officers during the voyage. The expedition yielded one dramatic sea-fight worth telling. The *Droits de l'Homme*, a fine 80-gun ship, carried the rear-admiral's flag, but was commanded by Commodore La Crosse. She was crowded with over 1000 French infantry under General Humbert. The *Droits de l'Homme* hovered off the Irish coast until January 9, and then turned its course, through rough seas and fierce gales, towards France. On January 13, just as the stormy winter night was falling, Pellew, in the *Indefatigable*, with a sister frigate, the *Amazon*, under Captain Reynolds, fell in with the Frenchman. The British frigates were quicker ships than their enemy, though, of course, each taken separately was to its huge antagonist as a dwarf to a giant. The Frenchman, however, could not open its lower ports, owing to the heavy sea running, and with exquisite seamanship the two British frigates kept just ahead of their antagonist, and crossed and recrossed its bows, pouring in a raking fire. Occasionally the Frenchman would smite its tormentors with a sullen broadside, but the advantage was all in favour of the light-heeled British frigates. It was a black night,

a wild sea ran, the air was full of wind-blown spray; but with obstinate daring the British ships hung on either flank of their quarry.

Towards midnight the mizzen-mast of the tormented Frenchman was shot away. Still this strange night-battle raged, until, in that black hour which comes before a winter's dawn, land was discovered close on board the three desperately fighting ships. The sea ran so high that the men working the guns on the main decks of the frigates were often up to their middle in water. Both British ships, indeed, were semi-wrecked, but the slaughter on board the *Droits de l'Homme* was tragical.

On the discovery of land, the *Indefatigable*, in spite of her semi-crippled condition, put about and proceeded to beat to windward; the *Amazon*, whose condition was more desperate, went ashore, but, with fine seamanship, almost the entire crew was safely landed, only, however, to become prisoners. In the grey winter dawn the *Droits de l'Homme* was discovered lying broadside on to the shore, with a tremendous surf sweeping over her. For two days and two nights the ship lay under the stroke of the breakers. On the second day an English captain and eight seamen, prisoners on board the Frenchman, put off from the wreck in a small boat, and reached the land. On the fourth day the boats from a brig-of-war reached the wreck of the unfortunate *Droits de l'Homme*, and took off the survivors;

but according to French accounts, 900 men had perished.

The French Directory meanwhile had prepared a sister expedition to that of Hoche, of what we have called the opera-bouffe character. They enlisted a body of galley-slaves and recruits raked from the prisons of Paris, invented for them a black uniform, and labelled them the Legion Noire. It was commanded by a Colonel Tate, an American officer, who had volunteered his services. "I saw the Legion Noire reviewed," records Wolfe Tone in his diary on November 10, "about 1800 men. They are the banditti intended for England, and sad blackguards they are." Wolfe Tone goes on to say that he had made a fair copy of Tate's instructions. He was to attack Bristol, carry it, if possible, with a rush, and burn it to the ground. "I transcribed with the greatest *sang froid*," says Wolfe Tone, "the order to reduce to ashes the third city in the British dominions, in which there is property to the amount of £5,000,000 sterling." Tate, with his banditti, duly set sail in February 1797 with two French frigates, a corvette, and a lugger, from Brest. They anchored at Ilfracombe, scuttled some small ships found there, and did a little domestic plundering. But the country people quickly rose upon them, and the squadron steered for Fishguard Bay, on the opposite coast of Pembrokeshire, and once more commenced to plunder the villages and burn the farmhouses. The militia

quickly gathered; the indignant British farmer, armed perhaps with a flail or a pitchfork, marched to the fray. It is said that a flock of Welshwomen on a hillside, dressed in the scarlet cloaks of the period, gave the French the idea the regular troops had taken the field against them, and Tate and the entire Legion Noire promptly surrendered, while the frigates which bore them to English shores were captured while attempting to reach Brest.

According to the description of an eye-witness, all the invaders were completely armed, but many were without shoes or stockings, or wore huge wooden clogs stuffed with straw, and resembled nothing so much as a horde of banditti. Their conduct corresponded entirely with their appearance. They burned, plundered, outraged, got drunk, defied their officers—did everything, in a word, except fight. The first thing, indeed, General Tate did after landing was to send an officer with a letter to the nearest British commander, explaining that it was "unnecessary to attempt any military operations," and he desired, "upon principles of humanity," to negotiate for a surrender. Half the unhappy Tate's army, in fact, was in open mutiny, and nearly all his officers were drunk. The only person in the expedition who seemed martially disposed was a woman who accompanied General Tate as wife or mistress. The red-cloaked Welshwomen who, drawn up on a distant hill, resembled regulars, and so im-

pressed the French imagination, when the surrender was complete came racing down the hill across the sands, their cloaks streaming behind them, to gaze at the captured French. These now realised the trick which had been played upon them, and were furious. General Tate's wife—or mistress—flew upon that unhappy officer, tore the hair in handfuls from his grey head, and, as only a French virago could, expressed her wrath at the whole transaction.

General Humbert's landing at Killala Bay represented a more serious attempt at invasion. He sailed from Brest on August 6, 1798, with some 1200 infantry and four field-pieces in three 40-gun frigates. The squadron, with great good luck, reached the coast of Ireland without meeting an enemy, hoisted English colours, and on the evening of August 22nd cast anchor in Killala Bay. Humbert was a rough but energetic soldier; he landed the same evening, and almost the first signal of welcome he met was the dead body of an Irish agent of the French Directory, with a French commission in its pocket, hanging from a tree! Humbert routed a small post of Fencibles, occupied Killala, and recruits commenced to flow in to him. No less than four columns of British troops were quickly in movement to crush Humbert, and the first fight took place at Castlebar, some twenty miles south of Killala. Humbert understood the business of war; his troops are described as "little, kiln-dried, and

worn men, veterans from Italy, from the Rhine;" and against such a leader and such troops the militia regiments which met them at Castlebar had not much chance. Humbert out-manœuvred his opponents and his men out-fought them. A rush of Humbert's light-footed infantry carried the guns, his skirmishers tormented the flanks of the militia regiments, who finally broke and fled, and some of them did not arrest their flight till they reached Tuam, thirty miles distant. The British lost about ninety killed and wounded, and the French captured fourteen guns and nearly 300 prisoners. "The race of Castlebar" long retained a humorous flavour in Irish annals. But by this time the British columns were closing round Humbert, and for the next ten days his career resembled that of a fox—a very wary and much-experienced fox — pursued by the hounds. Humbert finally surrendered on September 8th at Ballinamuck; he had enjoyed a run of exactly seventeen days from his landing at Killala Bay.

On October 26th the squadron that had brought Humbert on his ill-fated expedition to Killala Bay reached Irish shores again, bringing reinforcements; but Humbert was now a prisoner of war, and the French squadron, on learning this, put about for Brest. They were pursued by some British ships, but by dint of throwing overboard guns, cables, anchors, &c., outsailed their pursuers and reached Brest in safety, though in a highly flurried and bedraggled condition.

Napper Tandy's "invasion" was another expedition of a serio-comic character. This hero sailed on September 5 from Dunkirk in the French brig *Anacreon*, with General Rey and forty-five soldiers. The most alarming cargo the *Anacreon* carried was an enormous quantity of proclamations of the most bloodthirsty character; 30,000 men, it was promised, would array themselves under Napper Tandy's banner as soon as he landed. The brig carrying the gallant Tandy and his proclamations reached Rutland Island, on the coast of Donegal, on September 16, and the entire expedition landed in three boats. But the news of Humbert's failure chilled the courage of these heroes; they hastily re-embarked, and reached France in safety, fire-breathing proclamations and all. "Napper Tandy," wrote Lord Cornwallis, "is a fellow so very contemptible in character, that no person in this country seems to care in the smallest degree about him." He fell later on into the hands of the British authorities, but was allowed to betake himself in safety to the Continent.

On September 16, yet one more "army of invasion" sailed from Brest to fling itself on the Irish coast. It consisted of a 74-gun ship, the *Hoche*, and eight 40-gun frigates, under Commodore Bompart. The ships carried 3000 troops, a large train of artillery, and an immense quantity of military stores, all of which it was intended to land at Lough Swilly. Wolfe Tone accompanied this expedition, disguised

under the inexpressive name of "Smith," and carrying a commission as a French officer. This time the British naval authorities were on the alert, and on October 11, when the Irish coast was looming clear before the French ships, and Bompart was bearing up for Tory Island, the topsails of a British squadron came in view. It was Sir John Warren with three 74-gun ships and five frigates. Bompart hauled closely to the wind, and Warren threw out the signal for a general chase. As night came on, the gale that was blowing hardened to a tempest with a furious sea. The leading English frigate, the *Anson*, carried away her mizzen-mast, but a still worse disaster befell the French flagship. Her main-topmast carried away, and in its fall brought down the heads of the other masts. About the same time the *Résolue*, one of Bompart's frigates, signalled that she had sprung a dangerous leak.

Bompart adopted a desperate policy. He would sacrifice one ship to save seven. He despatched the *Biche* with orders to the captain of the *Résolue* to run his ship ashore, and by the use of rockets and blue lights, draw the British squadron after him, possibly to its destruction, while the remaining French ships would bear away in the darkness to the south-east. These more than Roman orders were not carried out; possibly their arrival on board the *Résolue* imparted sufficient energy to the pumps of that ship to enable the leak to be mastered. At day-

break the English ships came up and the *Robust* led down upon the *Hoche*. The fight was stubborn, but at half-past ten the *Hoche*, with her masts hanging over the side, her hull riddled, half her guns dismounted, and every second man in her crew struck down, hauled down her flag. Three French frigates also struck; three more were captured a day later, and of the entire squadron, only two reached a French port in safety. Wolfe Tone himself was amongst the prisoners taken; he was identified, put upon his trial, and committed suicide in prison.

These French expeditions enjoyed, on the whole, a curious immunity from hostile naval attack, and yet their total history is one of costly and ignominious failure. Of the six expeditions here described, only three succeeded in landing troops on British soil, and two of these can be described as "invasions" in a merely burlesque sense. Napper Tandy's "invasion" was, in point of fact, the most successful of the six. That warrior, with his "army" of forty-five men, came and saw; and if he did not conquer, at least he reached France again without damage. The French lost in prestige, in ships, in men, in money; and while the English side of the story is not very brilliant, yet this catalogue of attempted invasions serves to show that a military attack on England is idle unless planned on a vast scale, adequately commanded, and preceded by the conquest of the sea.

CHAPTER III

CAPE ST. VINCENT

WHILE France was thus pecking at England with ill-planned, unrelated, and abortive schemes of invasion, on the floor of the sea, in the great fight off Cape St. Vincent, a blow had been struck, which shook into at least temporary ruin the whole plans of the Directory against England. Later, at Camperdown, Duncan completed the work of Jervis at Cape St. Vincent; and not till Napoleon, in a shape yet more formidable, revived the strategy of the Directory were the shores of England menaced. But the scale of the victory won by Jervis at Cape St. Vincent, and the degree in which it changed the whole aspect of the struggle for England, are not easily realised.

In 1797, it must be remembered, England was practically without an ally. France was victorious on the Continent. Holland, with its hardy sailors and fine fleet, was the ally of the Republic. Spain, too, had joined hands with France, and a Spanish fleet of twenty-six ships was lying at Cartagena, ready to join the French fleet from Toulon. The

French fleet in Brest was to add itself to the combination; when the united armada, not far short of 100 sail of the line in strength, would sweep in pride through the narrow seas, and a storm of invasion would break upon Ireland. England had practically abandoned the Mediterranean. She had failed at Toulon, had given up Corsica, and was on the point of withdrawing her troops—if she could—from Elba. Sir John Jervis was cruising off Cape St. Vincent to prevent the junction of the Spanish and French fleets. If he succeeded in doing this, the great scheme of invasion might fall to pieces; but, in a sense, and for the moment, the fate of England hung on the part he was about to play. On February 1, 1797, the great fleet of Spain came straggling out from Cartagena. It was the first act in the great drama!

Nelson in his letter expresses much characteristic wrath at the timid withdrawal from the Mediterranean. "They at home," he writes to his wife, "do not know what this fleet is capable of performing; anything and everything. . . . I lament our present orders in sackcloth and ashes, so dishonourable to the dignity of England, whose fleets are equal to meeting the world in arms." But to Nelson himself had been assigned the perilous task of bringing off the British troops from Elba, and convoying them safely through a sea swarming with hostile flags. His flag flew from the

Minerve, he was accompanied by the *Blanche*, another frigate, and few scenes in even his stormy life were more crowded with incident than that brief run to Elba and back. At midnight on December 19, 1796, while off Cartagena, he stumbled on two Spanish frigates, and in the darkness a fierce and bloody combat ensued. Nelson held his fire and ran down till the Spaniard was almost at touch, and, through the gloom, the light of the battle-lanterns showed her men standing at quarters. Then, as Nelson tells the story, "I hailed the Don and told him 'This is an English frigate,' and called on him to surrender." But there was a strain of English blood in the Spaniard too. Its commander was Don Jacobo Stuart, a direct descendant of James II., who, if he was a bad king, was yet a good sailor. This descendant of the Stuarts shouted back through the darkness, "This is a Spanish frigate, and you may begin as soon as you please." Of the combat that followed, Nelson himself records, "I have no idea of a closer or sharper battle." Thrice Nelson ceased firing and asked if his foe surrendered, and thrice a haughty voice cried across the sea through the blackness, "Not while I can fire a gun." This was a foe after Nelson's own heart!

At half-past one in the morning, however, the Spaniard struck, as her sister ship also did to the *Blanche*. Nelson took his prize in tow; but the sound of the fight had drawn the enemy's ships on

to the scene from every quarter. At 4.30 A.M. the shadowy outline of another Spanish frigate loomed through the night on Nelson's quarter. He cast off his prize, and engaged the new-comer so closely that she presently hauled off. By this time the eastern skies were growing bright, and two Spanish line-of-battle ships were discovered running down before the morning breeze to the scene of action. Nelson had once more to cast off his prize, and was closely chased through the whole day following. He shook off his pursuers, reached Elba, and brought his convoy safely back through the Straits, looking coolly, meanwhile, into every hostile port he passed to ascertain the enemy's movements. He reached Gibraltar on the 9th, and learnt that four days before the great fleet of Spain had been seen going westward into the Atlantic. Nelson knew that a great battle lay ahead, and he fretted to join Sir John Jervis and take part in it. He was detained, however, for two days, but on the 11th set sail, and was instantly pursued by two Spanish line-of-battle ships.

The *Minerve* had been sadly damaged in the combats we have described; the Spaniards were quicker ships, and soon the leading line-of-battle ship was almost within gunshot. The sight-seers from the lofty batteries of Gibraltar watched the tiny *Minerve*, with her two huge pursuers closing fast upon her. At this moment the cry of "A man overboard" ran

along the decks of the *Minerve*, and in an instant a boat was lowered, with Hardy—then a lieutenant—in the stern-sheets, to pick up the drowning man. The swift tide quickly carried the boat far astern, and she struggled hard to come up again with the *Minerve*. Nelson had to choose betwixt abandoning his boat and coming within reach of the overwhelming fire of the Spanish seventy-four nearest him. His decision was unhesitating. "I will not lose Hardy," he said, and instantly backed his mizzen-topsail. This seemed equivalent to throwing away the ship; but, curiously enough, that spectacle of the British frigate with her sails aback checked the great Spaniard. It, too, threw its sails aback to learn what the manœuvre meant. Nelson picked up his boat and the *Minerve* leaned to the wind again on its course.

When night fell, Nelson hid all his lights and took a southerly course to throw off his pursuers. Presently lights began to gleam in the darkness ahead; they sparkled on every side. The sea was flecked with points of fire. Tall piles of canvas loomed vaguely through the blackness. The *Minerve* was in the midst of a strange fleet. In seeking to escape from two line-of-battle ships she had run into a fleet of nearly thirty! Nelson guessed this was the Grand Fleet of Spain, but he could not understand why it was running to the south. This seemed to show its stroke was meant for the West

Indies, and Nelson instantly determined that he would give up the attempt to join Jervis, and run before the enemy with the tidings of its threatened descent on the West Indies. Towards morning, however, with the sound of sullen signal-guns, and much flashing of signal-lights, the strange fleet swung its many stems laboriously to the west, and Nelson, still with lights hidden and the sternest silence observed, worked clear of the enemy's fleet. On February 13 he joined Jervis off Cape St. Vincent, bringing his news; he then hoisted his flag on board the *Captain*.

All that night the British could hear the sound of the Spanish signal-guns to the south-west, ship calling to ship through the darkness. The morning of the 14th came thick with mist. A grey haze lay heavy on the grey sea; and the British look-outs eagerly searched the slowly drifting fog for some hint of their foes. Presently a rift in the fog showed, in damp perspective, a dozen black hulls, and tall piles of lank and dripping canvas. Then the fog seemed to lift off the whole floor of the sea, and Don Josef de Cordova's great fleet was in full view. The ships, to quote an officer's description who gazed at the spectacle, "loomed like Beachy Head in a fog." Twenty-seven line-of-battle ships were counted from the English topmasts. One monster of four decks, the *Santissima Trinidad*—the biggest battleship at that moment in existence

—floated in their midst. There were six three-deckers, carrying 112 guns each, two ships of 80 guns, seventeen of 74 guns.

Jervis had fifteen ships of the line under his flag, and they compared with the Spaniards as badly in tonnage, in weight of fire, and in strength of crews as they did in mere numbers. The Spanish fleet, to take only one item, carried 2292 guns; the British only 1332! In scale, in picturesqueness, in gleam of colour and aspect of menace, the Spaniards quite eclipsed their English foes. Thiers says that the Spanish fleet "reminded one of the ancient splendour of the Spanish monarchy under Charles III." There was an air, that is, of royal and semi-mediæval stateliness about them. Nelson, who judged them from a severely nautical standpoint, said he thought the Spanish ships "the finest in the world;" but added, "The Spaniards, thank God! cannot build men." And, after all, it is not so much the guns which count as the men behind the guns. Jervis's fleet was an almost perfect fighting machine. His iron discipline seemed to be reflected in the stripped and workman-like aspect of the ships themselves, in the silence that reigned through all their decks, and in the measured, stately, and unswerving order in which they came on. Nelson himself has left on record his estimate of the ships that carried the flag of England on that fateful day. "Of all the fleets I ever saw," he wrote afterwards, "I never

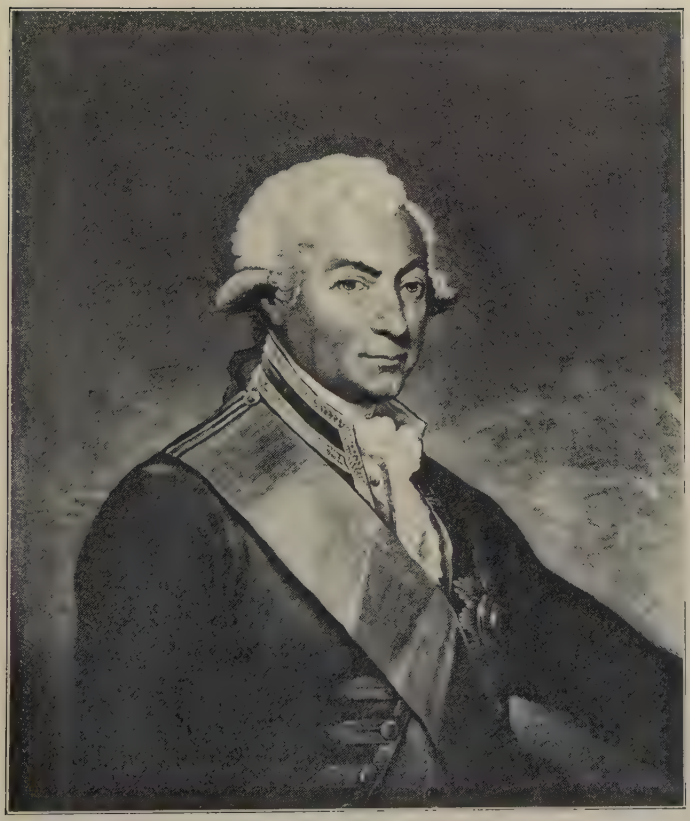
beheld one in point of officers and men equal to Sir John Jervis's."

Jervis was not required to waste a moment in his choice of tactics. His plan of battle was determined in an instant by the formation—or rather the want of formation—in the Spanish fleet. The Spaniards were running before the wind in a straggling irregular line, practically broken into two fragments. A cluster of six great ships formed the van division; then came a wide space of empty sea; then—a forest of disorderly masts, scattered along a wide section of the horizon—came the remaining twenty-one line-of-battle ships of Cordova's fleet. Jervis at that moment, with the wind on his quarter, was bearing down in two compact columns, in a course perpendicular to the Spanish line. That wide and fatal gap in its order stretched clear before him. If he could reach it, and place his fleet in close line athwart it, he could crush one section of the enemy's fleet before the other could beat up to its help.

A cluster of flags ran swiftly to the peak of the *Victory*, Jervis's flagship; the next instant the two British columns melted into one perfect far-stretching column, and with every inch of canvas spread pressed onward toward the gap. Troubridge in the *Culloden* led; Jervis himself in the *Victory* came seventh in the column; Nelson in the *Captain* was a mere joint in its tail, the thirteenth ship, a position which must have fretted his eager spirit, though the

accident that he occupied it, as it turned out, decided the fate of the battle. The *Excellent*, under Collingwood, was the last ship of the column. The spectacle of that steady and menacing line of British ships, driving as with the deadly thrust of a spear at the fatal gap in the Spanish line, sent an agitated flutter through the whole of Cordova's great fleet. Distracted signals fluttered from the heads of a dozen masts. The great body of the fleet, coming down before the wind, spread every inch of canvas; the dissevered fragment to leeward tacked, and strove desperately to beat up against the wind.

But on came the perfect and ordered line of the British. It was a race against time and fate. The race was close; but Jervis won! The leading British ship was already across the gap. The smaller Spanish division, clawing desperately up from the leeward, made a gallant attempt to break through the British line. The *Principe de Austrias*, of 112 guns, bearing the flag of the vice-admiral, reached the British line and daringly tried to break it. Its captain drove at the seventh ship, the *Victory* itself, flying Jervis's flag. That ship, as the great Spaniard came up to cross its track, was thrown into stays, and blasted the Spanish vice-admiral's ship with a fiery broadside that sent it reeling, with torn sails and splintered bulwarks, to leeward again. Three ships from the main body of the Spanish fleet did succeed in brushing past the steadily moving head of the



SIR JOHN JERVIS

From a mezzotint after a portrait by T. STUART

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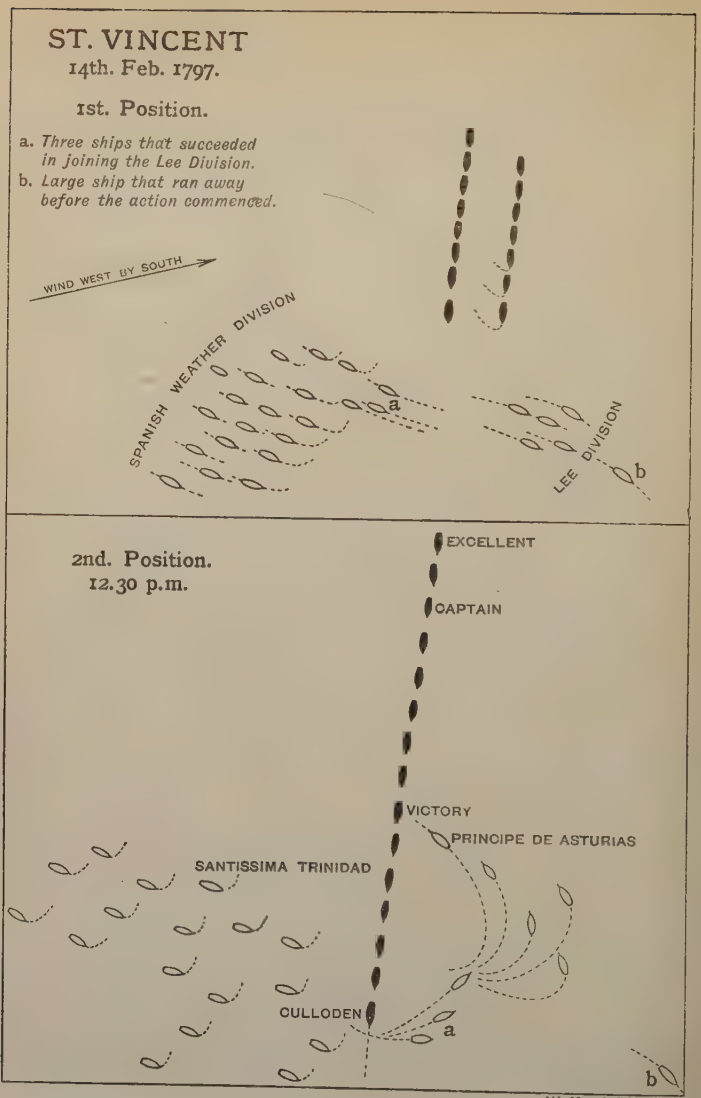
British column, and joined the squadron to leeward; but this division was practically out of the fight. One ship out of the nine, indeed, was already in ignoble flight far to the south-west.

The main body of the Spanish fleet, meanwhile, with the British fleet with leaning masts moving across its track, had gone about, and in a disorderly scattered column was bearing up to the north. Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, swept past what were now the rearmost Spanish ships, smiting them with his fire, and the moment he had gone beyond the Spanish column, tacked, and bore up to overtake the enemy. Each British ship, in turn, as it reached the same point, tacked in like manner; so that what before was an ordered and perfectly straight column of line-of-battle ships became now the two sides of a moving triangle, the vertex being the point where the British ships tacked. And as each ship in turn reached the point and swung off on its new course, that side of the triangle formed by the rear of Jervis's column naturally grew shorter. The course, in a word, was changed from S.W. to N.N.E., thus describing an acute angle. This brought about the memorable stroke which gave imperishable fame to Nelson and decided the fate of the battle.

The leading ships of the Spanish column, looking to leeward, saw the British line, which forbade their junction with their own dissevered squadron, move steadily on, and, as it moved, leave the track clear for them.



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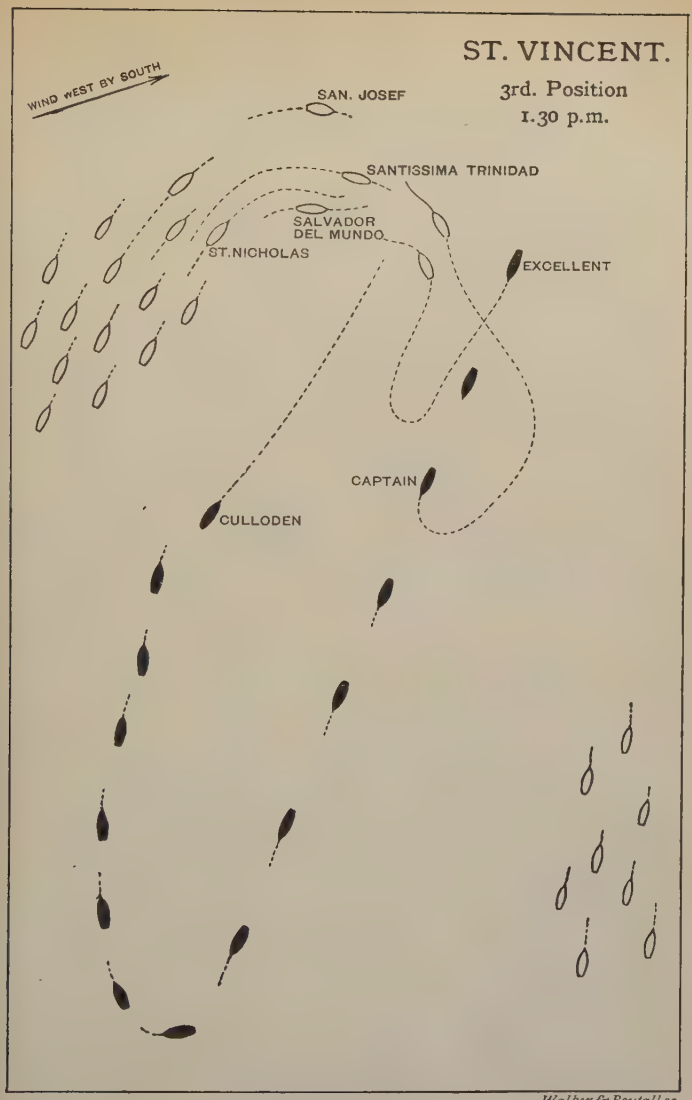

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The Spanish admiral had something of a sailor's brain, and a gleam, at least, of true leadership. He thought he saw his opportunity. A signal ran to his mast-head, the leading Spanish ships swung heavily round, and then, with wide-spread canvas and foam leaping high at their bluff bows, came tumbling down before the wind on an easterly course, which would carry them clean past the rear of the British line, and enable them to join their comrades to leeward. This gave a quite new aspect to the battle. Jervis, in the *Victory*, was far ahead, swallowed up in the smoke and tumult of the fight. He gave no signal; perhaps he scarcely yet grasped the meaning of the Spanish manœuvre. But Nelson, with the piercing vision of a great captain, had read the purpose of the Spanish admiral, and he took, with instant and unfaltering decision, the one step that would defeat it. A brief word to the quartermaster at the *Captain's* wheel, and the ship swung out of line to leeward, came round quickly, passed through the line again, ahead of Collingwood's ship, the *Excellent*, and bore up in the track of the great Spanish three-deckers, now coming down before the wind.

Calder, Jervis's flag-captain, standing on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, saw this sudden movement in the rear of the British line. Nelson had changed his course without orders, and Collingwood was following his example! His prim and querulous intellect saw in Nelson's act nothing but an irregularity,

if not something worse, and he appealed to his admiral to recall the *Captain*. But Jervis by this time had grasped the situation. "I will not have them recalled," he said; "I put my faith in those ships." Nelson, as a matter of fact, was risking both his fame and his life. He was acting without orders; he was throwing himself in the face of what seemed overwhelming odds. Towering in the Spanish van was the great *Santissima*, with its four decks; on either quarter were the *San Josef* and the *Salvador del Mundo*, of 112 guns each; pressing hard in their rear were three ships of eighty guns. Nelson stood singly in the track of these rushing monsters with coolest daring, and he chose the biggest of them—the *Santissima Trinidad*—as his immediate antagonist.

For a time—calculated variously from half-an-hour to an hour—the *Captain* sustained, unaided, or with the aid of the *Excellent* alone, under Collingwood, which presently came up, the fire of the Spanish van. It was in action at once with six Spanish ships, each of them immensely superior to itself in weight of fire. But the Spanish shot villainously; their very numbers, indeed, made their fire disastrous to each other; while, on the other hand, the *Captain's* fire was so swift and deadly that it made a sort of screen of flame about her. But even allowing for all this, the duel was so one-sided that the *Captain* was quickly reduced to

the condition of an almost mastless wreck; the wonder is she was not destroyed.

Collingwood in the *Excellent*, however, came into the fight like a giant, and took off three of the *Captain's* assailants in succession, compelling one to strike, and then moved still deeper into the crowd of Spanish ships. According to Nelson's own account, Collingwood "ranged up, passed within ten feet of the *San Nicholas*, giving her a most awful and tremendous fire." Collingwood's version of it, written afterwards, ran, "It added very much to the satisfaction which I felt in thumping the Spaniards that I released you a little." The part Collingwood played was heroic; his manner of describing it was homely!

The two lines of the British formed, as we have said, the two sides of a triangle, and Nelson's course, when he bore up to meet the rush of the Spanish van, may be said to have described the base of the triangle. This brought him, at last, almost into touch with the section of the British fleet which formed the other side of the triangle, and Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, at its head, now reached the vortex of the fight raging round the *Captain*. The *Blenheim*, the *Prince George*, the *Irresistible*, and other ships came into the fight, and the Spanish column, rent with the thunder of the English broadsides, abandoned the attempt to force its way past the British rear, and once more bore up. As an officer on board the

Captain, writing anonymously—but plainly, from intrinsic evidence, Miller himself—describes it:—"Whether it was our galling fire into their bows made them haul up in anger to return it, and those on the larboard side being obliged to follow the example to keep clear of each other, or that, seeing only two ships make such an attack, gave them a horrible idea of our fleet, I cannot say, but certainly together we turned them more like two dogs turning a flock of sheep than anything else I know of."

So the tumult of the fight swept slowly away from the *Captain* as it lay practically disabled. But two great Spanish ships, the *San Nicholas* of eighty-four guns and the *San Josef* of 112, lay almost equally disabled near it. Nelson told Miller to put his helm a-starboard, and the hull of the *Captain* swung heavily round on to the stern of the nearest Spaniard —the *San Nicholas*—her spritsail yard hooking in the mizzen shrouds of that ship. According to the account of the officer of the *Captain* from which we have already quoted, "Myself and Captain Berry hailed her to strike, but the answer was only mischievous guns. Having got now within ten yards of her, we steered in a parallel direction, gave her three broadsides as quick as thought, and then luffed directly on board at five minutes before four, our spritsail yard going across her quarter-deck." Miller, Nelson's captain and close friend—"the only truly

virtuous man I ever knew," as Nelson once oddly wrote—sprang sword in hand to head the boarders. "No, Miller," said Nelson, "I must have that honour." But the English boarders were too eager to leave the honour of leading them to anybody. Berry, then a young commander, leaped into the mizzen chains of the *San Nicholas*, and scrambled over its bulwarks. Other eager spirits raced up the *Captain's* spritsail yard, and leaped from it on to the Spaniard's deck. The quarter of the *San Nicholas* towered above the bulwarks of the *Captain;* a soldier of the 69th, reversing his musket, smashed in the quarter-gallery window of the Spaniard, and Nelson himself, followed by an eager swarm of boarders, crept through the broken window into the Spanish cabins. Nelson's body, according to Collingwood, was so attenuated that "it could almost go through an alderman's thumb-ring!"

Berry and the men who leaped from the *Captain's* spritsail yard were fighting on the quarter-deck of the *San Nicholas;* Nelson and his boarders broke through the cabins and sallied out on its spar-deck. Berry at that moment was pulling down the Spanish colours, and the Spanish officers were busy surrendering their swords. But though the fight had ceased on the upper deck of the *San Nicholas*, the guns on its lower deck were busy firing at the *Prince George*, then within gunshot; while the *San Josef*, a much bigger ship than the *San Nicholas*,

and whose high quarter commanded its decks, was pouring a venomous musket-fire upon Nelson and his boarders. It was no time for half measures, with the great guns shaking the ship under the feet of the British, and hostile musketry crackling sharply above their heads. Nelson summoned more men from the *Captain*, made his marines open an answering fire on the *San Josef*, placed guards at the hatchways of the *San Nicholas*, so as to prevent the yet unconquered Spaniards on its lower decks from swarming up. Then, gathering his boarders, he dashed at the *San Josef*. He was himself clambering up its tall side when a Spanish officer put his head over the bulwarks and shouted that they surrendered. Nelson climbed to the Spaniard's quarter-deck, scarcely believing in his own good fortune; but the captain of the *San Josef*, with a bow, presented his sword, and said his admiral was dying of his wounds below. Nelson made him summon his officers and crew and tell them the ship was surrendered; and then, as Collingwood describes it, "on the deck of the Spanish first-rate *San Josef* he received the swords of the officers of the two ships, while a Johnny, one of the sailors, bundled them up with the same composure he would have made a faggot, and twenty-two of their line still within gunshot!"

On the *San Josef*, when captured, the tompions were found to be still in a number of the quarter-

deck guns. These pieces had never been fired! The Spaniards explained this curious circumstance by saying that the fire of the English was too sudden and swift. The Spanish crews were driven from their guns, or slain beside them, before they had time to bring them into action.

Nelson's feat of boarding one Spanish three-decker across the decks of another was celebrated through the fleet as "Nelson's patent bridge for boarding first-rates." It marks the temper of haughty and exultant courage which Nelson, somehow, kindled in his crew, that, as Miller puts it, "we really got so proud during the action as to consider engaging a ship of two decks only"—the size of the *Captain* itself, that is—"as quite beneath us. We had the honour," he adds, "after an incessant action of four hours, to capture one ship of 112 guns and another of eighty guns."

By this time four Spanish ships had struck; but the lee division of the Spanish fleet describing a wide curve, was now approaching the main body, and Jervis flung his ships, in a long line, as a screen betwixt his prizes, with the disabled *Captain*, and the Spanish fleet. It was now past four o'clock; the Spaniards were still enormously superior in strength to the British, but their courage was broken, and, gathering up their disabled ships—chief amongst which was the sorely battered *Santissima Trinidad*—they fell back again to Cartagena. Measured by

the prizes taken, the fight off Cape St. Vincent does not rank high: measured by its political results it fills a great place in British history. It tumbled into ruin—for the moment, at least—the great plan for invading England. It strained, almost to the breaking-point, the alliance betwixt France and Spain. It kindled to a still hardier courage the temper of the British nation. Few battles, indeed, have, at the moment they were fought, more powerfully affected the spirit of the British nation. The haughty courage shown by Jervis in attacking with fifteen ships a fleet of twenty-seven thrilled England. And in a fight so gallant, Nelson's dramatic stroke, stopping with his single ship the rush of a fleet, and doing it, so to speak, in violation of orders, was of exactly the quality to delight the popular imagination. Nelson himself wrote to his wife afterwards, "The more I think of my late action the more I am astonished. It absolutely appears a dream." He lingers, however, with angry disappointment over the escape of the *Santissima Trinidad.* "Had not my ship been so cut up," he says, "I would have had her!"

Jervis himself was the sternest and least amiable of men; but when, after the fight was over, Nelson came on board his admiral's ship, as he stepped on the quarter-deck, still blackened with smoke and dirt from the struggle, with part of his hat shot away, the unemotional and saturnine Jervis fairly

took him in his arms and embraced him. Calder, indeed, ventured to remind Jervis that Nelson had disobeyed orders. "He certainly did," answered Jervis, "and if you ever commit such a breach of orders I will forgive you also!" Nelson's fame had grown fast, but now the whole nation recognised that in him it had, on the sea, a captain with something of the dazzling qualities Bonaparte himself displayed on land. According to Brenton, "From the day of the battle of Cape St. Vincent, the old fashion of counting the ships of an enemy's fleet and calculating the disparity of force was entirely laid aside, and a new era commenced in the art of war at sea."

Spanish wrath was expended on the unfortunate officers of the defeated fleet. Don Jose de Cordova was broken and dismissed the service; his flag officer, and six of his captains, suffered the same penalty.

The fight off Cape St. Vincent gave Jervis a title, and he is fully Nelson's peer in that memorable victory. Jervis's figure—gloomy, saturnine, powerful—fills a great space in the stormy history of that period. It cannot be said that his was a lovable character; he was, in fact, one of the best-hated men of his day. His well-known portrait by Carbonnier is a striking reflex of his character, with its thought-weary eyes, its long inflexible nose, its lines of iron strength, over which plays, somehow, a gleam of sardonic humour. A despotic temper, hardening on

slight occasion to pure tyranny, was, by the popular sentiment of the day, ascribed to Jervis. He was, no doubt, a man of iron resolution, and this was oddly accompanied with a Puck-like—not to say impish—humour, which found delight in caprices which other people, who suffered from them, found intolerable. "Lower, sir! lower," he once shouted to a trembling lieutenant of too subservient temper, who stood bowing before him on his quarter-deck. Jervis would choose the height of a gale as the moment for summoning all the chaplains of the fleet on board the flagship, and when the unhappy sea-divines, dripping wet, presented themselves on his quarter-deck, he simply ordered them to go down to his own chaplain's cabin and hold a conclave.

But Jervis was not merely a great sailor; he was a great man, and a great servant of the State. His stern discipline stamped itself on the British fleet. His strong brain is mainly responsible for the naval strategy which gave England the supremacy of the sea. The first line of defence for England, he held, was off the enemy's ports, and he framed the policy of those great and heroic blockades which kept the hostile fleets that threatened England sealed up in broken and helpless fragments. The mutinies which broke out under weak admirals had no chance against Jervis. His vigilance outran discontent, his stern and pitiless resolution crushed it. "Old Jack,"

as the sailors, in half-admiring wrath, called him, saw everything, feared nobody, and shrank from nothing.

Jervis, it may be added, possessed that true faculty of a great leader, the gift for selecting fit instruments. It was he who gave Nelson the great opportunities of his life. But for Jervis Nelson would not have commanded at the Nile or flown his flag at Trafalgar; and perhaps the best tribute to the strength and loftiness of Jervis's character is found in the fact that he is the one commander with whom Nelson never quarrelled and was never discontented. Nelson was perpetually fretting under the sloth or the stupidity or the selfishness of the unfortunate admiral who at that particular moment happened to be his own superior officer; but for Jervis Nelson had an eager and tireless admiration.

There could not well be a greater contrast than that displayed in the outward characteristics of the two men: the boyish figure of Nelson, with its alert face, sensitive, mobile, ardent; Jervis with down-bent head, gloomy brow, chin sunk on his breast, and look of sly and bitter humour. But Jervis in his saturnine way was a servant of the greatness and honour of England as loyal and as heroic as Nelson himself.

CHAPTER IV

SANTA CRUZ

AS far as the sea service of England is concerned, 1797 was a singularly hard-fighting year, and it is worth while describing one adventure in it, the attack on Teneriffe, which constitutes the single dramatic failure of Nelson's splendid career. Within a few weeks of the battle of Cape St. Vincent, Nelson was despatched with three ships of the line to cruise betwixt Cape St. Vincent and the African coast, and intercept some Mexican treasure-ships on their way to Cadiz. The treasure was supposed to amount to £6,000,000 or £7,000,000; its capture would half ruin Spain, while so great a mass of specie poured into the English treasury would be like new blood in the veins of England. The Mexican ships, however, failed to arrive; it was reported they had anchored in the bay of Santa Cruz at Teneriffe, and Nelson was eager to make a dash on that bay and carry off the great prize. Nelson, whose daring was always plentifully flavoured by common sense, urged that a considerable number of troops should form part of the expedition. These could land and

capture the batteries commanding the bay, and the success of the enterprise would thus be assured.

"If the troops lying idle at Elba, some 3700 men, were put at his control," Nelson writes, "the business could not miscarry." Even 1000 good infantry added to the marines in the squadron would ensure success. "Teneriffe," wrote Nelson, "never was besieged; therefore the hills that cover the town are not fortified to resist any attempt at taking them by storm; the rest must follow — a fleet of ships and money to reward the victors." But British troops, wasted on a score of profitless and inane adventures, could not be spared for an enterprise which offered such rich promise, and on July 15, Nelson, with the *Theseus* as his flagship, accompanied by two seventy-fours and four frigates, sailed for Teneriffe. The sailors were to carry out the enterprise without the help of land-forces.

On the 20th the lonely sky-piercing peak of Teneriffe was visible. Nelson kept his line-of-battle ships out of sight, organised a landing force of 1000 men, placed it under Troubridge on board his frigates, and sent them on in advance. A serious attempt on so strong a place could hardly be expected from three or four innocent-looking frigates; so Nelson hoped to take the Spaniards by surprise. Santa Cruz does not offer many facilities for attack from the sea. The shores are so high that a ship is very apt to be becalmed beneath them: they

are pierced by sudden valleys, through which, as through so many funnels, the wind drives; so that a ship, becalmed at one moment, may heel over to a furious gust at the next. The beach is a steep slope of loose rocks and water-worn stones, made slippery with seaweed. On this a great sea breaks almost incessantly, and the loose mass grinds and shifts under its stroke. The shore, it may be added, dips so sharply that the water, at a distance of only half a mile, has a sounding of forty-five fathoms. A ship, in a word, can find no anchorage except close under the overwhelming fire of the forts.

On the night of the 21st an attempt was made to land, but the tide ran so swiftly, and so strong a wind blew, that day broke before the boats had got within a mile of the shore. The chance of surprise was lost. Later in the day a landing was effected, the object being to seize the heights above the forts and thence make a dash at the fort itself. The line-of-battle ships coming up were to assist by a fire from the sea front. The strong wind prevented the ships coming within range of the forts. Troubridge gained the heights, but hesitated to attack. There were 8000 Spanish troops in the town, and Troubridge thought the position too strongly held to leave a reasonable chance of success. Troubridge's daring was essentially nautical. On his quarter-deck he was equal

to any adventure; off it he resembled a sea-bird trying to walk on dry land. His hesitation to attack when on the heights above the fort wrecked the expedition. Had Nelson stood beside him the assault would certainly have been made, and there can be little doubt Santa Cruz would have fallen. As it was, Troubridge withdrew his men and reached the squadron to report his failure.

But Nelson was not the leader to abandon a great scheme without firing a shot. He resolved to make by night, and from the sea, the attempt from which Troubridge had shrunk in daylight, and when holding heights which easily commanded the forts. This time, too, Nelson would lead the attack in person.

"Had I been of the first party," Nelson wrote afterwards, "I have reason to believe complete success would have crowned our endeavours. . . . I felt the second attack was a forlorn hope; yet the honour of our country called for the attack, and that I should command it. I never expected to return." "I do not reckon myself equal to Blake," he wrote just before the attack; "but if I recollect right he was more obliged to the wind coming off the land than to any exertions of his own. Fortune favoured the gallant attempt, and may do so again." But, unhappily, this is what fortune did not do.

The Spaniards had covered the mole, and the steep, slippery broken beach in its neighbourhood,

with the fire of a score of batteries. These, it was calculated, would crush the boats as they advanced, while some 8000 men were posted to slay or capture such of the attacking party as might succeed in scrambling ashore. At eleven o'clock, the night being dark and stormy, the boats, carrying some 1100 men, pushed off silently from the squadron, with Nelson in command. "I never expected to return," he wrote afterwards, when describing the dreadful adventure. He found his stepson, Nisbet, a mere lad, armed with dirk and pistol, following him to the boat, and told him to remain. The gallant youth, however, was obstinate, almost to the point of mutiny. "Sir," he said, "the ship must take care of herself. I will go with you to-night, if I never go again." Nelson yielded to a spirit so like his own, and owed to that circumstance his life.

The swift tide and the uncertain blustering gale twisted the tiny convoy of boats out of shape almost in a moment; but still, through the darkness, the crews struggled gallantly to reach the shore. So black and stormy was the night, that though the Spaniards were keenly on the watch, they caught no sign of the approaching attack till the boats were within half gunshot distance from the shore. Then, from every convent in Manila the bells rang furiously. Signal-fires awoke. Forty great guns, covering the mole, broke into flame. The whole

black front of the shore sparkled with sudden musketry fire. The British seamen pulled fiercely on their perilous way. Nelson's boat had just reached the head of the mole; beside it, rolling heavily in the rough sea, was a heavy cutter, the *Fox*, carrying no less than 180 men. There came a new blast of rushing shot from the batteries above, a crashing sound was heard on board the unhappy *Fox*, and she went down like a stone, and ninety-seven of her gallant crew were drowned! The same discharge from the Spanish guns sank a second boat, commanded by Captain Bowen, one of the most daring officers in the fleet; it swept over Nelson's boat, and a grape-shot struck him, passing clean through his right arm above the elbow, shattering the bone to fragments.

Nelson, when the shot struck him, was just in the act of drawing his sword, ready for the leap on the steps of the mole; the sword fell from his disabled right hand, but Nelson caught it as it fell, in his left. The blood poured out in great jets from the torn artery, and Nelson sank in a semi-swoon into the bottom of the boat. His stepson, Nisbet, coolly and quickly bound a handkerchief so tightly above the shattered joint that the flow of blood from the artery was checked. The seamen, meanwhile, were pressing up the steps of the mole, but with no Nelson to lead them. Four or five were called hurriedly back for the purpose of rowing

Nelson to his ship. As the boat pushed off from the mole, on every side in the black sea were the struggling seamen from the unhappy *Fox*, and Nelson roused himself at the sight, and, with his one unwounded arm, helped to drag as many of them as could be seen into his boat.

The boat carrying Nelson reached the *Seahorse*, but Nelson refused to be taken on board her. Its captain, Freemantle, was fighting amongst the landing party; his wife was on board the ship. "I had rather suffer death," said Nelson, "than alarm Mrs. Freemantle by her seeing me in this state when I can give her no tidings of her husband." The boat pushed on to the *Theseus*, and eager hands were offered to help Nelson up its side from the wildly tossing boat. "Let me alone," he said, "I have yet my legs left and one arm." He clambered up, unhelped, and told the surgeon to get his instruments ready; he knew he must lose his arm.

Meanwhile, not quite 400 British seamen and marines, with Troubridge at their head, had succeeded in landing. Part of them made a rush on the battery at the head of the mole, and carried it, cutting down its defenders and spiking its guns; the other boats, missing the mole, were flung on the shore under a heavy surf, which instantly swamped them. But the men, though with ammunition spoiled, scrambled out of the angry surf,

joined their comrades on the pier, carried, without the help of scaling ladders, a fort covering the mole, and fought their way to the rendezvous, the great square of the town.

Troubridge now found himself, with some 340 men, his retreat cut off, in the centre of a town held by 8000 troops. But with humorous audacity, he coolly despatched a sergeant to the citadel, demanding its immediate surrender! The sergeant was shot, and Troubridge resolved to try the desperate expedient of storming the citadel. Sailors have great climbing gifts, but to mount a perpendicular wall without the help of ladders, and against the fire of some 8000 troops, was too much for a party of half-drowned British seamen, not 400 strong, and with most of its ammunition spoiled. Troubridge, therefore, sent in a flag of truce, declaring he would burn the town unless he was allowed to march off his men and embark them without molestation. The Spaniards, glad to get rid of their alarming visitors on any terms, accepted these conditions, and with steady faces and flying colours the British sailors marched to the beach and pushed off. They had failed, but only where success was impossible, and their very failure was more splendid than some victories.

Nelson, however, was the man to feel failure keenly. Two days after he received his wound, he traced with his left hand a letter to Jervis, in which he says, "I am become a burthen to

my friends and useless to my country." In the hasty surgery of the cockpit, Nelson's arm had been unskilfully amputated, a nerve being bound up with the artery, and for months he suffered ceaseless and severest pain. His frail constitution, indeed, never recovered from the shock of that wound, and the exhaustion of the long pain which followed it. His feelings always ran to an extreme, and, in the despondency bred of failure and suffering, he believed his career ended. He must spend his remaining days, he declared, useless and forgotten. But the English imagination is more impressed by high and dauntless courage than even by the mere fact of success. And that night scene at Santa Cruz, with its sinking boats and drowning men, its handful of seamen attacking forts and batteries and a whole army, and even in failure marching off with flying colours, gave strange delight to the whole nation, and won a new popularity for Nelson. Here was a sea-captain whose audacious valour dared all odds, and found in overwhelming peril itself a new inspiration!

There remains to be described, to complete the picture of this stage of the struggle, that strange incident which cast, if only for a moment, so black a shadow on the fortunes of England, the mutiny of her own victorious fleets.

CHAPTER V

FLEETS IN MUTINY

ON the morning of Easter Sunday, April 15, 1797, the Channel Fleet was riding at anchor at Spithead. There were sixteen great line-of-battle ships, bearing some of the most famous names in naval history — the *Queen Charlotte*, the *Royal George*, the *Ramilies*, the *Defiance*, the *London*, the *Royal Sovereign*, the *Marlborough*, the *Glory*. At least every second ship had taken part in the great victory of the First of June, and together they formed the pride and the strength of the British navy. As the sun rose there was run up to the peak of the flagship, the *Queen Charlotte*, the signal to weigh anchor. The fleet was to move down to St. Helen's, in readiness to start on its cruise in search of the French fleet which had broken out of Brest. Instead of the answering pennant from the other ships, however, a strange sight was witnessed. The foreshrouds of the *Queen Charlotte* were suddenly black with sailors, and three stentorian cheers rolled out. Each ship in the fleet instantly gave an answering signal. Its foreshrouds were

manned, and in waves of hoarse sound, deep-voiced cheers ran round the whole squadron, ship answering ship. The Channel Fleet, lying at anchor in a crowded English port, and at the beginning of the greatest war England has ever had to wage, had broken out into mutiny!

For some weeks previous to this date, many anonymous letters and nautical "round robins" had been received by Lord Howe conveying the sailors' complaints as to a hundred wrongs in food, payment, and privileges. "Black Dick," as Lord Howe was familiarly called, was the seaman's friend, and the sailors naturally turned to him as their advocate with the Admiralty. Howe reported the complaints, and the admiral in command at Portsmouth was asked to inquire whether the seamen of the fleet had any real grievances. The captains of the various ships replied that any complaints were owing to a few agitators, and there was no reason to expect trouble. When the blue peter was hoisted and the foresails dropped, the first whiff of sea air would blow all his discontent out of the chambers of Jack's brain. On April 12, however, the port admiral—Parker—learned that a plot was in existence amongst the seamen to take the control of the ships from the officers, by way of dramatically advertising their grievances to the nation. The plot was to be carried out on the 16th, and it was determined to hurry the fleet to sea, and so anticipate

the conspirators. But the signal for weighing anchor, as it fluttered from the peak of the *Queen Charlotte* on April 15, produced the startling response we have described.

1797 is to the British navy in many respects a golden year in a golden age. It has a record of splendour. It was the year of Cape St. Vincent and of Camperdown; the great victory of June 1 was still fresh, the still greater glory of the Nile was in sight. Yet, by a curious paradox, 1797 is pre-eminently a year of discontent in naval records. A ferment of disgusted wrath was at work in nearly every British forecastle. The tragedy of the *Hermione* belongs to this year. No less than seventy-nine court-martials for mutiny and mutinous behaviour were held in the different squadrons. Above all, it is the year marked by the mutiny at Spithead, and the still more startling and famous mutiny at the Nore.

The Jack of that period, it is impossible to deny, had many grievances. He not seldom owed his place under His Majesty's flag to the enterprise of a press-gang; he was always ill-paid and often ill-fed. The captain of a man-of-war is necessarily a despot, and very thin partitions divide the despot from the tyrant. All the great cities of the three kingdoms, too, swept their human filth—the drunken, the dissolute, and the lawless—into the fleet; so that a simple-minded salt might easily find himself swinging in his ham-

mock beside some roguish attorney struck from the rolls, some pickpocket from a London slum, some thievish tradesman, dismissed for his country's good and for his own, for robbing his creditors, to the stern discipline and plain diet of a man-of-war. "Consider," wrote Collingwood, "how large a proportion of the crews of the ships are miscreants of every description, and capable of every crime." How could it be otherwise when the fleet was the cesspit of the nation, and the commonest form of jail delivery was to despatch a procession of scoundrels to the nearest seaport for service in a man-of-war?

This rough human material needed rough treatment, and got it. Deaths from flogging were not unknown. Baron Ompteda records in his journal that every second man in the crew of the man-of-war in which he sailed was flogged. Thiebault says that, in another king's ship in which he sailed, every morning was spent in distributing floggings amongst the men, and when he left the ship there was an arrears of seventy floggings yet to be divided amongst a crew of only 140 men. Thiebault's arithmetic may, perhaps, be suspected. It is a matter of fact, however, that floggings to the amount of forty-nine dozen are recorded in the log of the *Impétueux* in the short run betwixt Cawsand Bay and Berehaven in 1799. One captain of the navy was dismissed his ship for marooning a sailor on a tiny and desolate rock for the somewhat inade-

quate crime of theft. Campbell, in his "Lives of the British Admirals," shows that in the four years betwixt 1776–80 no less than 42,069 sailors deserted. Every fourth sailor in the fleet, that is, ran. Yet these were the men—seized by impressment, underpaid, ill-fed, and not seldom ill-used—who fought and won the most glorious sea victories history records.

Good captains, of course, made good ships. Collingwood, after a cruise of fifteen months, during which his anchors had not once touched bottom, had not one man on the sick-list. Nelson, after a similar cruise of two years, had a record as good. In a crew of 800, to whom fresh beef was an impossibility and vegetables the wildest of dreams, there was not a single case of scurvy. But the ordinary conditions of life were very hard. The pay of an able seaman remained at the rate fixed in the time of Charles II.—9½d. a day—and was usually very much in arrears. The seamen were fed on a diet of biscuits, of a hardness suitable for road-metal; on salted beef—or "horse"—so saturated with mineral that it would sometimes take polish as readily as an agate. The water was bad, the ships were often wet, the supply of clothing was inadequate, and the term of service unreasonably long. If the quality of the food was bad, its quantity was often cruelly abridged by the greed of the pursers.

The Magna Charta of the seamen at Spithead, the catalogue of their grievances, is almost touching by its simplicity and reasonableness. It was a forecastle Bill of Rights with five clauses. The hunger-bitten Jacks demanded—(1) "That our provisions be raised to the rate of sixteen ounces to the pound, and of a better quality." The purser, it is to be noted, deducted two ounces out of every pound of meat in Jack's beef-kid, and of flour in his pudding, as his perquisite. The purser of the period had no fixed salary; he was paid by gains of this character, and, naturally, as his perquisites expanded the rations of the sailors shrank. (2) "Your petitioners request that your honours will be pleased to observe that there shall be no flour served while we are in harbour"—Jack, that is, wanted fresh bread while in port, instead of weevily biscuits. Also, "that it might be granted that there be a sufficient quantity of vegetables of such kinds as may be most plentiful in the ports to which we go." Clause 3 asked for "better care of the sick, and that the necessaries for the sick be not on any account embezzled." Clause 4 asked "that we may be looked upon as a number of men standing in defence of our country, and that we may in some wise have grant and opportunity to taste the sweets of liberty on shore when in any harbour, and we have completed the duty of our ship after our return from sea." "Which," added Jack, "is a natural request,

and congenial to the heart of man." Clause 5 asked "if any man is wounded in action, his pay be continued until he is cured and discharged."

Jack's mutiny, in short, was based not on "the rights of man," but on the villainous condition of the beef-tub. It represented, not any yearnings for "fraternity," but only for fresh vegetables when in port. The sailors added, "We likewise agree in opinion that we should suffer double the hardships we have hitherto experienced before we would suffer the crown of England to be in the least imposed upon by that of any other power in the world." But they went on to declare that they would not weigh anchor until their grievances were redressed, "except in the case of the enemy's fleet putting to sea." In that event Jack was cheerfully willing to suspend his complaints until he had thrashed the Frenchmen; then he would return, fresh and happy, to discuss matters again with "their honours, the Lords of the Admiralty."

The sailors, having determined to temporarily take possession of the fleet, carried out their plans with great art and resolution. A quaint strain of loyalty, and of respect for discipline and for their officers—or for most of them—ran, however, through their mutinous proceedings. Order was enforced with rough sternness. The Jacks of the fleet, indeed, plied the whip more energetically on each others' backs during the interregnum of the mutiny

than their own officers ever dreamed of doing in the days of their unchallenged authority. A captain was appointed from each forecastle "to see that watches were kept and order observed." A thread of boyishness runs through Jack's character, and it was gravely ordered that the crew of each vessel should man the foreshrouds at eight o'clock every morning, and deliver three loud cheers into space; in this sonorous, but somewhat inarticulate fashion, proclaiming to each other and to the world that the mutiny was still in existence. On Sunday, again, during divine service, all the boats of the fleet were manned, and the seamen rowed in procession round the harbour. The crew of one ship, the *Royal Charlotte*, having failed to cheer with due punctuality and heartiness at eight o'clock, they were warned that they would be fired into next morning unless their cheers had the necessary volume; and the vocal performances of the offending ship on the next day were waited for by the sea-dogs on every forecastle in a severely critical mood. A rope with a noose at its end hung from the fore-yard-arm of every vessel, as an expressive hint of what would happen to any offender. Any sailor getting drunk was flogged by his fellow-seamen with extraordinary vigour. The zeal of the fleet, indeed, for temperance, was surprising.

A rough flavour of humour ran through the punishments the sailors enforced upon each other.

Thus the favourite penalty for many offences was to suspend the offender from the mainyard by a rope and duck him thrice in the sea. Great respect was shown to the officers, a few who were very unpopular being sent ashore. The mutineers, however, paid as much respect to their own delegates as to the officers, and as the representatives from each ship came daily on board the *Queen Charlotte*, the side was duly manned to receive them; each tarry delegate, quid in cheek and a self-conscious cock in his eye, hitching his breeches as he marched with dignity to the admiral's state-cabin, where the council of delegates—a sort of forecastle Board of Admiralty — met. The mutineers gave a formal permit to some frigates, who had to sail on convoy duty. The trade of the country was to be interfered with as little as possible.

Such an outbreak, of course, created an immense sensation. On April 17, Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, attended by two junior Lords, hastened to Portsmouth, and on the 18th three admirals—Gardner, Colpoys, and Pole—were sent on board the *Queen Charlotte* to confer with the seamen, and to discuss their demands. Lord Spencer himself, it seems, was anxious to interview the men, but the admirals objected. He might be seized by the men, and detained as a hostage; and the possibility of the First Lord of the Admiralty being held as a prisoner and hostage on board the Channel Fleet was a naval

scandal too appalling to be risked! The seamen received the admirals with great respect, and were told their requests would be granted. But Jack was amusingly sceptical. He wanted to actually see the much-desired vegetables on their way to the ships. Sailors have the suspiciousness as well as the simplicity of children. The promise of the Board was not sufficient; they must have their claims acknowledged by Act of Parliament. The king, again, must pardon them for the measures they had taken, and they must see with their own eyes the king's name at the foot of the document.

One of the admirals, Gardner, an old and angry man, grew furious at the spectacle of a group of tars dictating terms to their superiors; and, standing on the forecastle of the *Queen Charlotte*, he roundly abused its crew for being "skulking fellows who knew the French were getting ready for sea, and were afraid of meeting them." Having relieved his feelings by an energetic use of sea expletives, he jumped on the hammock nettings, took hold of the noose dangling from the fore-yard-arm, and announced that the rascals might hang him there and then if they would only return to their duty!

This blast of sea rage broke up the negotiations. Lord Spencer and the junior Lords returned to London; the sailors addressed respectful memorials to Parliament and to the Board of Admiralty, reciting afresh their grievances, and declaring that till

these were redressed and full pardon assured, not an anchor would be lifted unless the enemy put to sea. "This," the Jacks declared with emphasis, "is the total and final answer." By way of dramatically announcing their feelings, the guns of the fleet were loaded and the red flag hoisted. Hitherto Lord Bridport's flag had floated from the *Royal George*, but the admiral himself now indignantly hauled it down. It should not fly side by side with the red flag of mutiny. The demands of the seamen were at last fully granted, a proclamation of pardon was signed by the king on April 22, the red flag was struck, and the whole fleet broke into general and exultant cheers. The mutiny had lasted just a week. The next day the fleet hoisted anchor and dropped down to St. Helen's Bay, two ships—the *London* and the *Marlborough*—remaining at Portsmouth.

At St. Helen's, however, the fleet was wind-bound for a week, and in that interval a mischievous debate took place in the House of Commons, and a yet more mischievous circular was issued by the Admiralty. The debate in the House of Commons gave the seamen the impression that the promises made to them were not to be kept, although Pitt had laid before the House an estimate increasing the annual vote for the remainder of the year by £236,000, to provide for the increased pay to the seamen. The circular issued by the Admiralty was really intended to soothe its own self-respect. It had negotiated

with mutineers; and it now sent round a circular strictly forbidding all captains to do what the Admiralty itself had done. All captains, in addition, were instructed to "see that the arms and ammunition belonging to the marines were constantly kept in good order and fit for immediate service as well in harbour as at sea." On the first appearance of mutiny the most rigorous means were to be used to suppress it, and to bring the ringleaders to punishment.

The publication of these orders bred an instant panic in the fleet, and out of the panic mutiny was reborn. On May 7th all the ships at St. Helen's were once more in the hands of revolted crews. Lord Bridport had previously made an unsuccessful attempt to get the fleet to sea, but the seamen would not sail until the last shadow of doubt as to the terms granted them had vanished. Two boats were despatched by the mutineers at St. Helen's to communicate with the *London* and *Marlborough*, still lying at Spithead. Admiral Colpoys, whose flag flew from the *London*, had meanwhile got the new circular and acted on it; he refused to allow the delegates to board his ship, drew up his marines, and threatened to fire on the boats as they lay alongside the *London*. The dispute betwixt boat and ship grew loud; an angry order was given; the marines actually fired, killing three of the delegates and wounding five others. But with the crackle of the muskets discipline vanished; the ship was

seized; a cluster of seamen began to unlash one of the foremost guns, that they might swing it round on the quarter-deck. The first lieutenant of the *London* shot one of the mutineers dead. He was seized by the sailors, taken at a run to the forecastle, and a noose put round his neck for the purpose of instantly hanging him.

Even at that wild moment, however, when the passions of the men were at their highest, discipline exerted something of its ancient magic. Admiral Colpoys thrust his way into the crowd shouting that he alone was to blame, that the lieutenant had only carried out orders received direct from the Admiralty. The sailors demanded to see the orders, gravely inspected them, though very few of them could read them, and then declared that the lieutenant had "only done his duty," and took the rope off his neck. Some seamen in the crowd shouted that the admiral himself was "a d—— bloody rascal." Such language, addressed to an admiral, seemed little less than blasphemous to the mutineers, and its author was roughly told he would be pitched overboard if he used such language again during the dispute.

A more bitter temper now crept into the mutiny, though the matter in dispute was no longer whether or not the men's demands should be granted, but only whether the fact that they had been granted should be announced in a form and with a publicity

that would end the half-childish doubts of the forecastle. This situation lasted till May 14th. The mutineers learned that the men on board one ship had discussed the question of sailing to a French port and giving the ship up to the French. Here was mere black treason! Immediately some of the most powerful ships in the fleet moved into a position so as to cover the guilty vessel with their fire; guard-boats kept watch over her day and night, and she was warned that at the first sign of movement she would be sunk! Jack was determined to get his fresh vegetables and his shilling a day, but his ancient hate of all Frenchmen burned as brightly as ever!

On May 14 Lord Howe arrived at Portsmouth armed with authority to settle all disputes. "Black Dick" was beloved throughout the fleet; the fame of June 1 rested on his white hair, and the sailors who had fought under him could trust him. Portsmouth at this time was practically in a state of siege, with field-pieces guarding the landing-places; but Lord Howe's arrival quickly brought matters to a peaceful conclusion. The seamen had by this time added a new clause to their "bill of rights," or rather had worked out in detail the clause in the original demand which stipulated that the grievances of particular ships should be redressed. They prepared, that is, a list of unpopular officers, and demanded that they should be sent ashore.

Howe found himself powerless to resist that demand; in the case of many of the officers, indeed, he felt it was highly expedient they should be removed from the ships. But could Jack be allowed to officially maroon such officers as he disliked? With much tact Howe got the seamen to change the form of their request, and the arraigned officers to petition on their own behalf that they should be transferred to other ships. The surrender to a mutinous demand was thus covered with a decent verbal screen, and the proprieties of discipline, at least, preserved. The number of officers removed from the fleet is given in Barrow's "Life of Howe" as follows:—1 admiral, 4 captains, 29 lieutenants, 5 captains of marines, 3 lieutenants of marines, 3 masters, 4 surgeons, 1 chaplain, 17 masters' mates, 25 midshipmen, 7 gunners, boatswains, and carpenters, 3 sergeants, 3 sergeants of marines, 2 corporals of marines, 3 masters-at-arms.

All these officers were continued on full pay till fresh ships were found for them, but such a clearing out of the quarter-deck at the request of the forecastle was a very startling incident. When this was done, the seamen rowed in procession, with bands of music, to St. Helen's, to give thanks to Lord Howe. "Black Dick" was received on the following Monday on board the flagship with the thunder of guns and a tempest of cheers, and on the 16th the fleet set sail to blockade Brest.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

From an engraving by F. Bartolozzi, R.A., *after a portrait by* Appiani

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CHAPTER VI

THE LATER MUTINIES

THE second and more violent stage of the Spithead mutiny might have been escaped. It was due simply to want of tact, promptitude, and clearness on the part of the Admiralty. Meanwhile a much more dangerous mutiny had broken out at Sheerness, where the North Sea Fleet was lying at anchor. On May 12, Admiral Buckner's flag was flying from the *Sandwich* at Spithead. The *Queen Charlotte,* Howe's flagship in the great fight of June 1, had been the starting-point of the mutiny in the Channel Fleet. The *Sandwich,* a ship almost equally famous—Rodney's flagship at the taking of St. Eustatius—was the starting-point of disaffection in the North Sea Fleet. Mutiny grows fast, and carries a more deadly infection than typhoid or smallpox. The sailors of the North Sea Fleet had no special grievances, but the triumph of their messmates at Spithead corrupted them. They must have a mutiny on their own account, and demand something—they scarcely knew what—in advance of what the men at Spithead had secured.

On May 12, when the flagship flew the order to prepare for sea, its crew, after the Spithead fashion, duly manned the foreshrouds and gave three cheers, and that signal of revolt was instantly answered throughout the whole fleet. The officers were in a moment helpless. Each ship appointed a committee of vigilance, while a committee of delegates met in the flagship for the general control of affairs. In each ship the captain of the forecastle took command, and a set of "rules and orders" was drawn up and nailed to the foremast of every vessel. These new articles of war are a curiosity worth putting on record:—

Rules and Orders.

1. Every ship shall diligently keep a quarter-watch; and every man found below in his watch shall be severely punished.
2. Every ship shall give three cheers morning and evening.
3. No woman shall be permitted to go on shore from any ship, but as many may come in as please.
4. Any person attempting to bring liquor into the ship, or any person found drunk, shall be severely punished.
5. The greatest attention to be paid to the officers' orders. Any person failing in the respect due to them, or neglecting their duty, shall be severely punished.

The mutineers in the North Sea Fleet, it may be added, showed in quaint form that instinct for ordered silence which was so marked a feature of the sea-discipline of the period. Clause I. of the articles adopted on board the *Adamant* and other ships ran, "That no disafection be shown to any

officer whatsomever." Clause IV. prescribed that "No aclamations or noises, or any expressions such as 'Grog' be used, and that good order and strict dissipline be carried on until this business is over."

The mutineers specified their demands under eight heads, and of these only three were objectionable. They demanded that "no officer dismissed from a ship should be employed in the same ship again without the consent of the crew;" "that the men who had run should not be liable to be taken up as deserters;" and that the articles of war should be amended. Neither at Spithead nor at the Nore, it will be noted, did the sailors protest against the two genuine and serious scandals of the service—the employment of the press-gang and the too cruel use of the whip.

From the very first the mutiny at the Nore had an evil temper. A political flavour ran through it. The tone towards the officers became insolent. Parker—a seaman on board the *Sandwich*—took the lead in the mutiny, and the sudden sense of power made him drunk with arrogance. A letter was addressed to the Admiralty declaring, "We will not come to any accommodation until you come to the Nore and redress our grievances." Parker assumed the title of "Admiral of the Fleet," and marched through the streets of Sheerness with a red flag carried in state before him. The Thames

was blockaded by the mutineers, and Parker majestically issued permits signed "L. Parker, Admiral," to such ships as were allowed to pass. Seventeen delegates were despatched to Admiral Duncan's fleet, lying at Yarmouth, to secure its co-operation. The delegates reached the fleet just as it was putting to sea, and Duncan promptly took them on board his own ship and carried them off with him to the Texel. The other ships in his fleet, however, broke into mutiny one by one, and turned their backs upon their Admiral, until the flagship alone—the *Venerable*—with the *Adamant*, was left to blockade the Dutch fleet. Duncan, as will be described presently, clung obstinately to his post, and succeeded in keeping the Dutchmen in port by the device of making frequent signals to a non-existing fleet, supposed to be below the sea-line.

Meanwhile the mutineers at the Nore grew more threatening in temper, and Ministers, at last aroused, and conscious that public opinion would tolerate no weakness, took strong measures against the revolted seamen. Communication with the ships was forbidden. A flotilla of gunboats was prepared. The entrance to the Medway was strongly armed. A proclamation was issued offering pardon to all sailors who returned to their duty within a given time, and proclaiming as mutineers and rebels those who persisted in disobedience. Sheerness was abandoned by its inhabitants and occupied by troops;

volunteers were called upon to man a squadron under Sir Eramus Gower for the purpose of attacking the mutinous ships. Volunteers poured in; all the officers belonging to the Indiamen in port offered their services. The watermen from the Thames crowded to the king's ships. The seamen of the fleet at Spithead and at Plymouth sent strong letters of remonstrance to the ships at the Nore. "Your present proceedings," wrote the men of the Plymouth Fleet, "are a scandal to the name of British seamen." The buoys and beacons were removed at the mouth of the Thames, so that the mutinous ships could not sail away.

Parker and his co-delegates, however, kept their haughty tone. Parker had an interview with Lord Spencer and two of the junior Lords on May 29, and when Lord Spencer said "he must consult with the Cabinet," Parker replied, "Aye, consult the ringleaders of your gang." Some signs of wavering at last became visible amongst the mutineers. The men found that Parker and his co-delegates had kept back from them that part of the royal proclamation which offered a full pardon to all who returned to their allegiance within a fixed time, and angry discord broke out in the revolted ships.

Meanwhile the situation was such as is happily without parallel in British history. The Thames was held by a British fleet as though by a hostile force. The whole trade of the kingdom was arrested.

The capital itself lay within striking distance of a body of mutineers who were in possession of more than twenty-four line-of-battle ships. No wonder that consols fell to 45½, and that it seemed as if the darkest hour in the fortunes of the nation had come. But the stubborn British temper was at last aroused, and the nation was determined not to yield to mutineers. The revolted ships found themselves cut off from all communications with the shore. Their supplies were failing. Their native land was shut against them. The sense of being in quarrel with law paralysed the mutineers. Had there been some leader of commanding character amongst the mutineers, they might have attempted some daring act; but they were practically without leadership. Parker was a demagogue with a fluent tongue but no brains. To prove that he was not making money out of his comrades, he told them, "I owe my washer-woman 1s. 6d., and have not money to pay her;" upon which one of the men shouted, "Well, then, you are a precious admiral, indeed!"

On May 31 the mutineers sent in a flag of truce to say they would return to their duty on condition of receiving two months' pay in advance, a supply of clothing, and a full pardon; but the authorities refused anything less than an unqualified submission. On June 6, two of the revolted ships—the *Serapis* and the *Discovery*—slipped their cables, and, under an angry fire from the rest of the fleet, ran up the

Thames and returned to their allegiance. This desertion might have broken up the mutiny, but at the very same moment four line-of-battle ships, who had deserted Admiral Duncan's squadron off the Texel, sailed in and joined the mutineers.

The delegates were by this time holding very anxious debates as to their future course. The bitter east winds blowing made it impossible to sail for an Irish port; patriotism forbade them giving up their ships to the French; and pride—the curious pride of the forecastle—stood in the way of their seeking shelter in America. On June 9, however, Parker resolved to put to sea, though without any port being fixed upon. The wind was favourable, the fore-topsail of the *Sandwich* was loosed, a gun fired, every ship answered the signal. But not a ship moved! Not a sailor would go aloft to unfurl the canvas or put his hand on a capstan-bar to weigh anchor. The fleet, in a word, sullenly refused to obey its own delegates. The mutiny had collapsed!

The officers of the *Leopard* had noted the wavering purposes of its crew; they suddenly seized the ship, slipped its anchors, and ran through the fleet. The *Repulse* followed, and the whole fleet broke into fire on these two ships; but, much shattered, they made their escape. Furious quarrels now broke out amongst the mutineers; orders and counter-orders were issued. The red flag and the Union Jack chased each other from masthead to masthead, as

one faction or another prevailed. The meetings of the delegates became mere pugilistic encounters. On Monday, June 12, most of the ships hoisted signals of mourning. All that night fierce debate raged amongst the crews; the debates in many instances became desperate. Bloody combats took place, and many lives were lost. On Tuesday, five of the revolted ships slipped their cables and stood up the Thames. Fourteen vessels yet remained at anchor, but the famous confederacy at the Nore was practically ended.

Parker made an attempt to escape, but the sailors of the *Sandwich* themselves thwarted his attempt. The Admiralty, meanwhile, had offered a reward of £500 for Parker's arrest. He is described in the proclamation as "black-haired, about thirty years of age, about 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, has rather a prominent nose, dark eyes and complexion, is generally slovenly dressed in a plain blue, half-worn coat, a light-coloured waistcoat, and half-boots." On Wednesday the red flag had vanished from the masthead of every ship, and about three o'clock the *Sandwich* itself came drifting into port with a white flag at her maintop. The ship was boarded by a picket-guard of the West York Militia, and Lieutenant Mott, with a group of seamen, going below, seized Parker, who made no resistance. Ship after ship sent ashore its delegates as prisoners, until more than 300 were crowded into the prisons at Sheerness. One group

of delegates seized a boat and succeeded in reaching Calais, where, as fugitives and deserters, they entered the French service.

Parker was tried by court-martial on the charge of piracy and high treason. He came of a respectable family, had entered the navy at twelve years of age, and had risen to the rank of acting lieutenant. He then came into the possession of a small estate, left the navy, married, plunged into a dissolute life, sank into poverty, fell into the hands of the press-gang, and thus entered the navy again as a sailor. He showed no capacity for leadership while at the head of the mutiny, but bore himself with great coolness and good sense during his trial, and met his fate with singular calmness. He asked at the moment of execution if he might speak, and said, "I wish only to declare that I acknowledge the justice of the sentence under which I suffer, and hope my death may be considered a sufficient atonement." He gave the signal for his own execution by dropping a handkerchief. As the patch of white linen fluttered down from his hand, the bow-gun of the *Sandwich* shot out a jet of white smoke, a flash of fire, and as its roar swept over the water, Parker's body swung off into air and hung a quivering corpse at the yard-arm of the ship in which he had played for a brief time a part so evil.

That dark hour in the history of England quickly passed, and it is a curious fact that the very men

who ran up the red flag of mutiny at the Nore, only sixteen weeks afterwards, under Admiral Duncan, won one of the most brilliant naval victories in British history. The glory of Camperdown may well hide in merciful oblivion the shame of the Nore. The men were misled, were ignorant, but they were not in deliberate purpose disloyal; and they had some real grievances — grievances which, happily, have been long since redressed. Barrow, writing in 1838, says that the mutiny had the effect of fixing official attention on the grievances of seamen, and that, as a result, a man-of-war's-man is now better fed, better lodged, and in sickness better taken care of than any other class of labouring men. The number of out-pensioners at the time of the mutiny was only 1500; when Barrow wrote it was 20,000, and the average amount of each pension was three times as great as in 1797. Nor has that impulse of improvement exhausted itself yet. The seamen of England are its defence and pride, and the country is wisely and generously careful of the welfare of the class to which it owes so much.

An obscure chapter in the history of these mutinies remains, which has never yet been fully told, and perhaps never will be, though its records lie in the musty recesses of the Admiralty. It is that which describes the abortive mutiny in St. Vincent's fleet off Cadiz in 1798, a mutiny which was due to the United Irishmen in the fleet, and which shows how nearly the

unhappy political troubles of Ireland came to wrecking the naval power of England. Mr. H. W. Wilson has given, from the Admiralty records, an interesting but brief account of this little-known but most perilous mutiny. Wolfe Tone claimed that there were 80,000 Irishmen in the fleet, all of them actual or potential rebels; but Wolfe Tone's arithmetic usually belonged to the realm of the imagination. In 1798 there were perhaps 25,000 Irishmen in the fleet, the majority of them loyal, hot-blooded, hard-fighting sailors of the average type, with no politics at all. But when the Society of United Irishmen was suppressed, great numbers of its members, by way of punishment, were sent to the fleet, and they naturally took their politics with them. The policy of the United Irishmen was not to fight the French in the interests of England, but to join them as allies against England, and they could not do this more effectively than by seizing, if possible, an English fleet, and carrying it into a French or Spanish port.

The ferment of mutiny had stirred in St. Vincent's fleet off Cadiz in 1797, and had been suppressed by that admiral with iron severity. After Nelson had been detached on that great pursuit of Brueys' fleet which ended in the battle of the Nile, Sir Roger Curtis joined St. Vincent off Cadiz with a squadron from Berehaven. Curtis was a weak admiral; his fleet was full of United Irishmen, and half the

ships were trembling on the edge of mutiny. On May 20, 1798, St. Vincent compelled the crew of the *Marlborough* to hang one of their own number, sentenced to death for mutiny. The boats of the fleet lay in a ring, with loaded cannon and lighted matches, round the vessel, prepared to sink her if the sentence of the court-martial was not instantly carried out. That is a dramatic and well-known scene in British naval history; but one detail of it has, somehow, been almost forgotten. During that fatal hour, when it seemed possible that an English man-of-war would be sunk in front of an enemy's port by English guns, three other ships in St. Vincent's fleet—the *Prince*, the *Hector*, and the *Princess Royal*—were pledged to come to the aid of the *Marlborough;* and St. Vincent actually had armed boats rowing round one of these ships, the *Prince*, with instructions to attack her if she moved. St. Vincent's stern will prevailed, and the swaying body of the mutineer, as it was run up to the yard-arm of the *Marlborough*, showed that the forces of order had won. But the naval power of England was in deadly peril during those brief moments when the rope was being fitted round the neck of the mutineer on the *Marlborough* by the hands of his own comrades.

The incidental attempts at mutiny by the United Irishmen of the fleet were numerous, and were sometimes marked by great daring. Thus in the *Cæsar* there was a plot to murder the officers of the ship,

kill the Protestants in the crew, and carry off the ship to Brest. The plot was detected, and six of the *Cæsar's* crew were condemned to death. In the *Defiance*, again, there was a similar plot. An oath was signed by many members of the crew to "carry the ship to Brest the next time she looks out ahead at sea, and to kill every officer and man that shall hinder us, and to hoist a green ensign with a harp on it, and afterwards to kill and destroy the Protestants." Twenty-four of the crew were tried by court-martial for this plot, and nineteen were sentenced to death. Ten of the crew of the *Captain* were flogged through the fleet for a similar attempt at mutiny.

But the most dangerous of these plots springing from the poisonous element which the United Irishmen spread through the fleet came to a head in St. Vincent's fleet in June 1798. Its leader was a United Irishman named Bott. He was a ruined lawyer, who had belonged to the inner circle of the United Irishmen, and by way of punishment had been sent to serve in the fleet. Bott secured the help of three seamen, named Connell, Sweeney, and Jones, as his immediate assistants; he linked all the disaffected spirits in the fleet together in a league, binding them by a mouth-filling oath borrowed from the imprecatory literature of the United Irishmen. In his own ship alone—the *Princess Royal*—Bott had sworn in 200 men, and there was a similar

organisation, though on a less spacious scale, and perhaps of a less audacious temper, in several other ships of the squadron. There was the usual vagueness as to the exact objects of the mutiny, but its temper was both murderous and disloyal in a degree far in advance of anything known at Spithead or the Nore. One clear preliminary was that they would hang Admiral Jervis first, and every officer in the station afterwards. "The officers," St. Vincent himself writes, "were to have been massacred; and if the ships from Ireland had joined, I was to have been hung with the other officers, admirals, and captains." The men had chosen one of their number named Davidson to be commander of the fleet. "It was intended," one of the leaders of the mutiny said, in his dying confession, "to go up the Straits and take the ships from Admiral Nelson, and go with the whole fleet to Ireland." "Admiral Nelson" himself would probably have had some energetic comment on that plan to offer before it could be carried out!

The moment was fixed for seizing the *Princess Royal* —the first step in the conspiracy—when the whole plan was wrecked by what seems a trivial accident. The leader of the outbreak was suddenly ordered away as one of a boat's crew on some trifling errand. He dare not refuse to go and so precipitate the outbreak, but his departure left the mutineers without a leader. The hour passed, and at dawn the next

day a dozen informers were eager to save their own necks by denouncing the plot that had failed; or, what was equivalent to failure, had loitered. Bott and his fellow-accomplices were seized, tried by court-martial, and hanged; and this peril, in turn, passed away, and England escaped the amazing spectacle of seeing the Mediterranean Fleet hang its own admiral and betake itself to Irish ports in order to assist the cause of the rebels, or to French ports in order to fight under the tricolour against the Union Jack!

It may be said, of course, that no such calamity could really have happened. A few ships might have mutinied, and, as one of the ringleaders of the mutiny admitted, "had their plan succeeded the men would have murdered each other, as there were so many different opinions among them." But even a partial mutiny, had it broken out, would have shaken the fortunes of England well-nigh into wreck. That Great Britain escaped that peril is due largely to the stern energy of St. Vincent; perhaps even more it is due to the wiser and more humane spirit which Collingwood and Nelson infused into the naval discipline of the day. The British seamen of that period, as a general rule, had no politics. To obey orders, hate all Frenchmen, and fight the ship as long as a plank floated, or there was a shot left, was the whole duty of man when translated into nautical terms. The United Irishmen were but a minority

amongst the seamen of Irish blood and birth in the fleet. Taken as a whole, indeed, in courage, hardihood, and loyalty, the Irish seamen of that day compared with those of any other nationality in the fleets of Great Britain.

But the naval record of 1797 was not to end with a tale of mutiny; the last sentence in that record tells the tale of Camperdown, a naval victory which for scale and results is worthy to be ranked with St. Vincent itself.

CHAPTER VII

CAMPERDOWN

ON October 13, 1797, Pitt was dining at Walmer Castle with a select company of friends. "We were sitting drinking a glass of wine," wrote one who was present, "when a man . . . a smuggler, came abruptly into the room, and told us he had just come on shore from his vessel, returning from the coast of Holland, where he had witnessed the great victory gained by Admiral Duncan." That smuggler, with his light-heeled lugger hanging to windward, had watched the British and Dutch ships joining in the bloody and stubborn fight off Camperdown; then, while the smoke of the battle still lay on the sea, had run, with every rag of canvas spread, to England, out-flying even the fast gun-brig that Duncan had despatched with the news before the fight was over, and brought to Pitt the earliest tidings of the victory which set all the cities of England aglow with rejoicing fires, and lifted the shadow of a great peril from the three kingdoms.

Camperdown was fought at an hour when the

national fortunes wore a very black complexion. The last of England's subsidised allies had made peace with France, and Great Britain stood alone, with half Europe arrayed against her. Only a few weeks before, the very fleet which fought for the British flag at Camperdown was in open mutiny, blockading the Thames. The country was threatened with a financial crisis. The British fleet had been withdrawn from the Mediterranean. Jervis and Nelson at Cape St. Vincent had, it is true, broken the strength of the great Spanish fleet from Cadiz, which was intended to cover a descent on English shores; but another invading expedition from Brest had only failed owing to stress of weather. And for months a great Dutch fleet had been lying in the Texel ready to convey some 30,000 French troops, under Hoche, on a fresh expedition to Ireland. The fleet in the Texel had, indeed, been a menace to England all through the summer of 1797. Duncan had maintained an unrelaxing blockade of the Texel through nineteen stormy weeks; but the great mutiny swept through the North Sea Fleet, and all Duncan's ships save one forsook their admiral, and spread their sails for Sheerness to join the ships in revolt there. The command of the Channel lay absolutely at the mercy of the enemy's fleets.

Duncan, however, is one of the noblest and most attractive figures in the navy of that period, and his iron fortitude and unshakable audacity main-

tained the fortunes of England during one of the most perilous crises in its history, and won a victory which did almost as much as St. Vincent to defeat foreign invasion, or as the Nile to secure for the British flag the mastery of the sea.

Whether Duncan was a scientific tactician may perhaps be doubted; the critics sniff unkindly at his method of attack at Camperdown. But that he was a great seaman and a born leader of men cannot be denied. He has been described as "the biggest and finest man in the navy." He was six feet four inches high, massively built, with a countenance which, even as it looks out at us, furrowed with battle and crowned with white hairs, from Copley's well-known picture, makes credible the story that as he walked through Chatham, while still a youthful lieutenant, people would turn and follow him admiringly, drawn by his great stature and noble features. His face has not merely the lines of strength, the open commanding eye, and the firm contours of a man accustomed to great affairs: a curious air of refinement and thought, which must have been somewhat rare on the quarter-decks of British ships in those days, lies upon it. Duncan was a Scotchman, and he possessed in a high degree all the characteristic virtues of his race: sense, force, gravity, an iron steadiness of nerve, and an unsentimental but absolutely flawless devotion to duty. He had no gleam of Nelson's

original and fiery genius; and during the smoke and tumult of a great fight, no air-drawn vision of a peerage or Westminster Abbey visited his imagination. He had, in fact, very little imagination. A plain-minded, straightforward Scotchman, he fought the battles of his country with a devotion as loyal, and as lofty, as that of Nelson or of Howe.

It is a proof of Duncan's sober and unromantic bent of mind that when he led the storming party from his ship, the *Valiant*, at the attack on the Moro Castle in the West Indies, he climbed through the breach at the head of his men, and in the teeth of a deadly musketry fire, armed with only a walking-stick. He did an heroic thing, that is, but in an unheroic fashion. Duncan's manner of dealing with the mutiny is characteristic. The North Sea Fleet was what might be called a "scratch" collection of ships, raked together from every quarter, unknown to each other, and over whose captains and crews Duncan had not yet had time to cast the spell of his steadfast character and strong will. In each of the three fleets the flagship was selected as the starting-point of the mutiny, the *Queen Charlotte* at Spithead, the *Sandwich* at the Nore; and in the North Sea Fleet the mutiny was attempted first on board Duncan's flagship, the *Venerable*. On April 30 the men of that vessel gave the usual signal of a rising by suddenly breaking into three cheers. The sound brought Duncan to the break of his quarter-deck;

ADMIRAL DUNCAN

From a mezzotint after the portrait by J. HOPPNER, R.A.

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he stalked instantly and fiercely down amongst the mutineers; his tall figure, his brow of command, and his peremptory voice cowed the men. They shrank before him. The mutiny straightway flickered out before his mere look

In the days that followed, Duncan repeatedly addressed his crew as a body, and his plain sense and known humanity not only held the men steady, but established a perfect mastery over them. Duncan was a deeply religious man, and he knew how to speak to the somewhat inarticulate, but deep-seated religious feeling which always lurks somewhere in a sailor's character. Duncan, in fact, cherished a Scotchman's delight in solemn and long-drawn homiletics. In one of his "talks" to his men, of which the notes are still preserved in his own handwriting, he sternly rebuked the crew for their habit of swearing. "If there is a God," he told them—'and everything round us shows it—we ought to pay Him more respect. In the day of trouble the most abandoned are generally the first to cry for assistance and relief from that God whose name they have daily taken in vain." The men in reply addressed Duncan in a letter whose spelling is villainous, but whose sentiments are admirable. "No one knows," said these honest and contrite Jacks, "what unforeseen deamon possest our minds to act as we did; theirfore we pray and put our trust in the Almighty God that our future

conduct may be acceptable to you and suficent to convince you of our fully repenting of our past misconduct," &c.

Duncan went from ship to ship through his fleet, and addressed the crews in turn, but he showed that he knew how to do strong deeds as well as talk strong words. He demanded of the crew of one ship if there were any man there who presumed to dispute his authority. "I do," cried one of the leaders of the discontented section, with disconcerting bluntness. Duncan took one long stride to the man, seized him by the collar, bore him, struggling but helpless, to the side of the ship, held him in the grasp of one huge hand suspended over the bulwarks, and said, "My lads, look at this fellow who dares to deprive me of the command of the fleet! That expressive object-lesson suppressed the mutiny, for the moment at least. An admiral with such a strength of muscle, and such promptitude in using it, was very impressive to the forecastle imagination! Discontent under the shadow of such a hand must learn to speak with whispering humbleness; or even not to speak at all!

On May 29, however, Duncan's entire fleet, with the exception of one ship, forsook him. Duncan at that moment was making for the Texel to resume his blockade. On June 1 he found himself with a single 50-gun ship, the *Adamant*, outside Texel. "I looked into the Texel last evening," he records,

"and saw in the roads fourteen sail of the line and eight frigates, with a number of other vessels, amounting in the whole to ninety-five." It seemed mere lunacy to pretend to blockade twenty-three ships of war with only two; but Duncan's orders were to "keep the Texel closed," and, with ships or without ships, he intended to discharge that task. He mustered his crew, described the situation in the most unadorned language, told his men he proposed to do his duty till the ship sank, and offered them the consoling reflection that "the soundings were so shallow that his flag would still fly above the shoal water after the ship and company had disappeared." And his men accepted that view of the matter with entire cheerfulness! Duncan then sent for Hotham, the commander of the *Adamant*, the one loyal ship that remained, and told him to fight her until she sank, as he proposed to do with the *Venerable*. Prince Hardenberg dwells with wondering admiration on the fact that, during the mutiny, the English did not withdraw one vessel from the blockade of Brest, Cadiz, or the Texel. "It was the firmness," he says, "of ancient Rome." But as far as the Texel was concerned, at least, the mutinous crews of the British ships withdrew themselves from the blockade. How much more than Roman firmness it was on Duncan's part still to maintain the blockade when his ships had forsaken him!

Duncan, however, was no crack-brained Don Quixote, but a practical and hard-headed Scotchman. He added sense to sentiment. He anchored the two ships at the outer buoy of the Texel, where the channel was so narrow that it admitted of only one ship passing in at a time. He corked up the bottle which held the Dutch fleet, that is; and he actually kept his crew at quarters for three whole days and nights while the wind was favourable for the escape of the Dutchmen. When the wind chopped round to the west, and thus made it almost impossible for a fleet to work out of the port, Duncan drew off into the offing and there diligently made answering signals to an imaginary fleet beyond the sky-line. The heavy-breeched and heavy-witted Dutchmen were thus persuaded that the entire British fleet was waiting behind the horizon, ready to fall on them if they ventured out. It was a great opportunity for the Dutch, but they were unable to recognise it; and there are few scenes in British naval history more wonderful than this spectacle of a British admiral, without a fleet, successfully blockading the entire naval force of Holland by a mere display of histrionic bunting.

By June 17 the mutiny at the Nore had been suppressed, and Duncan's ships, in an ashamed fashion, but with discipline restored, were once more under his flag. All this time, it must be remembered, a French force, variously reckoned at from

25,000 to 35,000 men, was waiting to embark at Texel for the invasion of Ireland. Wolfe Tone, the Irish emissary, was on board one of the Texel ships, and his journal reflects the emotions and agitations, the intoxicated hopes and the blasphemy-flavoured exasperations, of that period. The winds, as if in a conspiracy against the French plans, blew furiously from the west. On July 26 Wolfe Tone records, "I am to-day eighteen days on board, and we have not had eighteen minutes of fair wind." On July 19 he writes, "Wind foul still—horrible, horrible! Admiral De Winter and I endeavoured to pass away the time playing the flute, which he does very well. We have some good duets." Both De Winter and Wolfe Tone, it may be added, performed duets of a very different kind a short time afterwards, and to quite other tunes!

Hoche had by this time abandoned the idea of commanding the army which was to invade Ireland, but 4000 Dutch troops were actually embarked on board the ships, and the persistent bad weather kept them there so long that they ate up all the provisions intended to last them on their voyage to Ireland, and so they had, on the mere logic of hunger, to disembark!

Hoche died during this long delay. Any hope of a successful invasion of Ireland had vanished into the thinnest air. The plan of obtaining command of the Channel by the junction of the Spanish and

Dutch fleets had been wrecked by Jervis's victory at Cape St. Vincent, and the remains of the Spanish fleet were held in close blockade at Cadiz. But there remained the Dutch fleet—the single weapon with which, at that moment, the Directory could strike at the naval power of England. The Dutch authorities were accordingly required, in peremptory accents, to launch at Duncan's fleet the whole naval strength lying at the Texel. De Winter received an order to put to sea at all risks, and engage the enemy with the first favourable wind. The French were cheerfully willing to expend any number of Dutchmen for the sake of feeding fat their hate of the British; and the Dutch authorities apparently thought it was only necessary to be in command of a Dutch ship to become a Van Tromp or a De Ruyter! On October 6, accordingly, De Winter led out from the Texel perhaps the finest fleet that ever flew the flag of Holland. It consisted of twenty-one ships and four brigs, manned by over 7000 seamen.

Duncan had been compelled to put into Yarmouth Roads to refit, but his light vessels kept vigilant watch over the Texel, and on the morning of the 9th the *Active*, a fast little cutter of seventy-eight tons, came flying before the breeze with the news. Its commander, fearing he might not reach Yarmouth before night fell, tacked, and ran up the back of the Yarmouth sands, firing guns to attract attention,

and signalling that the enemy was at sea. In this way some hours' time was saved. Duncan, in fact, weighed anchor so promptly that many of his officers who were on shore were left behind, and lost both their share in the great fight and their promotion. At eleven o'clock the British fleet was in full sail for the Dutch coast; by two o'clock in the afternoon it was close in to the Texel, but found the roads empty. At daybreak on the 11th the sea-line to the north-east was fretted with the topsails of a great fleet. It was De Winter with his Dutchmen!

The morning was squally, with a dark sea rolling under dark skies, and the tall canvas of so many great ships showed like gleaming white towers against the gloomy sky-line. Duncan's one concern was to come within striking distance of his enemy as quickly as possible, and prevent him reaching the sheltered roads of the Texel. De Winter, a good sailor, with the phlegmatic and obstinate courage of his race, prepared for the fight. He formed his fleet in a close line, and resolutely awaited the approach of the British. To keep their ships in line the Dutchmen alternately kept their topsails full and shivering, thus drawing in steadily into shore. Duncan felt this was no time for leisurely tactics or elaborate manœuvring. At twelve o'clock he flew the signal for close action, and signalled to his fleet that he should pass through the enemy's line and engage to. These were daring tactics; for though the English admiral

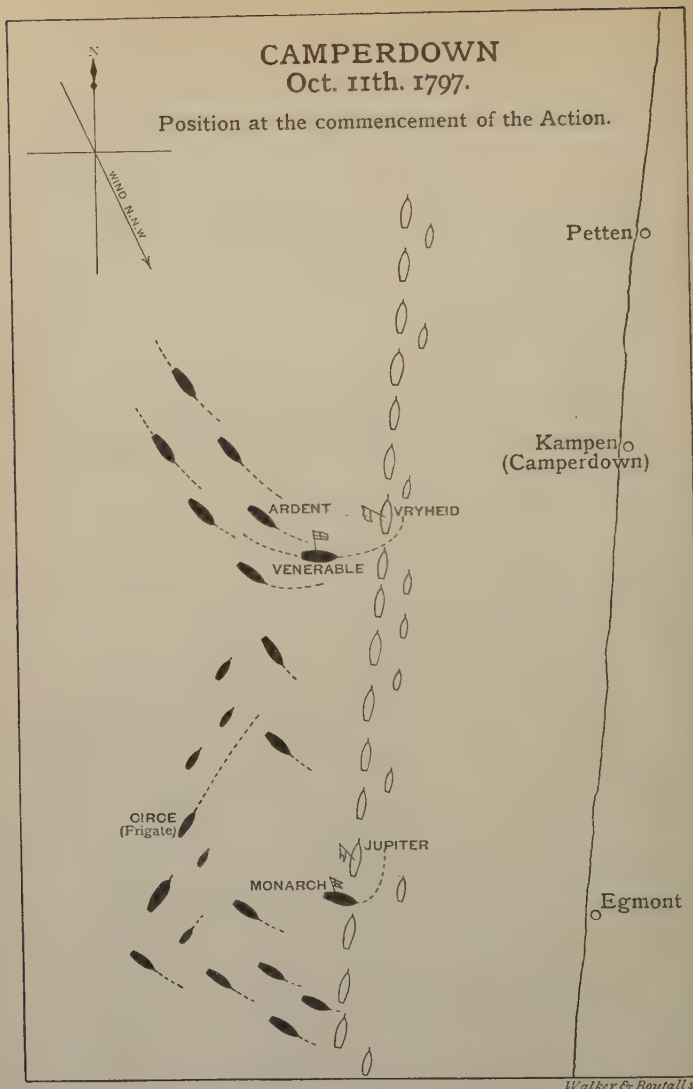
thus cut off the Dutch from a sheltering port, he also, with the same movement, was putting his own fleet between the enemy's line and a hostile coast not five miles distant.

The British drew on to the orderly line of their enemies in two somewhat confused groups. Onslow — Duncan's second in command—led the larboard division in the *Monarch*. Duncan himself, in the *Venerable*, led the starboard division. Quickly the great British ships came on, the Dutch holding their fire. Jervis afterwards keenly criticised Duncan's method of attack. The action, he said, was "fought pell-mell, without order or system." But the swift, unhesitating character of Duncan's onfall really won the victory. De Winter himself, after the fight, said to Duncan, "Your not waiting to form a line ruined me. If I had got nearer to the shore before your attack, I should probably have drawn both fleets on it, and it would have been a victory to me, being on my own coast." Duncan's attack — eager, instant, resolute — it may be added, exactly reflected the spirit of his fleet. It is of one of the ships in that fight, the *Belliqueux*, that a familiar story is told. Its captain — Inglis, a hot-tempered, hard-fighting Scotsman — found himself puzzled by the signals, and at last, flinging his signal-book on the deck, he exclaimed, "D—— it! Up with the hellum and gang into the middle o' it."

Steadily, but in irregular clusters, the stately British

liners closed with their foes. Ralph, in his "Naval Biography," says that an impressive scene took place that moment on the quarter-deck of the *Venerable*. Duncan had called his officers about him, and, baring his white head, solemnly offered a brief prayer, committing himself and his crews, and the cause for which they were fighting, to the Divine favour and protection. No wonder that his natural Scottish courage caught a still loftier assurance from his religious faith! An officer just about that time asked him how many ships they were going to engage. He replied, "I don't know, but when we have taken them, we will count them!"

Onslow, like Collingwood afterwards at Trafalgar, outsailed his chief and struck and broke the enemy's line first. So close was the order of the Dutch ships that there seemed no gap through which the *Monarch*, Onslow's flagship, could break, and his captain called Onslow's attention to that fact. "The *Monarch* will make a passage," said Onslow coolly—repeating unconsciously the words of Bowen, the captain of Howe's flagship on the First of June — and held steadily on his course. Somebody must give way under such conditions, and the Dutch ship immediately in his path shrank from the crash. Its head swung off, and the *Monarch*, admirably conned, glided through the opening, poured a fierce broadside into the stern of the ship to starboard, another into the bows of the *Jupiter*, flying the flag of the Dutch



Compiled from a drawing by permission of the Earl of Camperdown.

vice-admiral, to port, then swung round broadside to broadside with the *Jupiter* at scarcely three yards' distance, and engaged in furious combat with that vessel. Fifteen minutes afterwards the *Venerable* came into action, breaking the Dutch line at the stern of De Winter's flagship, the *Vryheid*, and both ships were instantly lost to sight in clouds of whirling gun-smoke.

Ship after ship of the British came up, passed through the Dutch line, and opened fire, and the roar of the fight deepened every moment. The first two broadsides of the Dutch were terrible; but after that the British on an average fired three guns to their enemy's one. The fighting, that is, was too quick and close for the slower-blooded Dutch; the energy of the British overbore their phlegm and coolness. Nothing, however, could surpass the courage shown on both sides. For obstinacy, indeed, the combat recalled the engagements of Blake and Van Tromp in an earlier century. Many stories are told illustrating the manner in which the British ships fought. On board the *Ardent* one of the men's wives insisted on working at one of the guns, and kept her place amidst the tumult of the fight till she fell desperately wounded. The flag of the *Venerable* was shot away with the cap of the mast from which it was flying, and a sailor was sent up to rehoist it. He deliberately nailed the flag to the mast, using the butt of his pistol as a hammer, and while doing so a

shot struck the mast close to his face, and drove a cluster of splinters clean through his cheek. Nevertheless he deliberately finished his task, descended to the rigging; and, as he sprang down on the deck amongst his cheering comrades, he exclaimed while the blood ran from his mouth, "Never mind, that's naught!" A seaman named Kirby was carried into the *Venerable's* cockpit with both legs shattered. As the surgeon was busy amputating the stumps, Kirby remarked, with a sea-going expletive, that he supposed those scissors would finish the business of the ball. He was told that this would too probably be the case. "Well, never mind," he replied; "I have lost my legs and will lose my life, but we have beat the Dutch; so I will have another cheer for it. Hurrah!" The incident serves at least to show the temper of the British forecastles.

But the process of "beating the Dutch" was both tedious and difficult. For three hours the stubborn fight raged, the sullen thunder of the cannon rolling in one wave of deep and continuous sound to the distant shore, crowded with spectators. One after another, however, the Dutch ships struck. De Winter himself fought till he remained the only unwounded man on the *Vryheid's* deck. The carnage on the *Venerable* was almost equally great. "The pilot and myself," wrote Duncan afterwards, "were the only two unhurt on the quarter-deck, and De Winter, who is as tall and as big as I am, was the

only one on his quarter-deck left alive." But as the other Dutch ships struck, one after another of the victors came up to join in the fight that raged round the Dutch flagship; till at last, a drifting hulk, with her masts over her sides, and her scuppers crimson with slaughter, the *Vryheid* lowered her colours.

De Winter might, and probably would, have escaped, for the Dutch coast was near, and all the precedents of Dutch naval history were against the surrender of an admiral on his own ship. A quick-witted officer on board the *Circe*, who knew something of letters, said to his captain, "If you have ever read the history of the Dutch wars, you must know that De Winter will run all risks to get on board some other ship, as De Ruyter and other Dutch admirals did formerly. It is plain the *Venerable* has not a boat that will swim; if you will give me the jolly-boat I will take the Dutch admiral out of his ship before he can escape." The lieutenant of the *Circe* received his captain's permission, pulled to the *Vryheid*, scrambled across a whole raft of wreckage under her lee, and, followed by three men, reached the quarter-deck of the Dutchman. He found De Winter on his knees, holding a square of sheet lead, while a carpenter was nailing it over a shot-hole in the bottom of a small punt about twelve feet long, which was about to be launched for De Winter's escape. Putting his hand on the Dutch admiral's

shoulder the lieutenant told him he was his prisoner. De Winter followed his captor reluctantly across the raft of wreckage we have described to the English boat, but a floating spar turned under his feet, and he disappeared into the sea. The British sailors watched eagerly for his reappearance, but for some moments in vain. The unfortunate Dutch admiral had risen under some floating canvas, where, at last, he was discovered. A sailor slit the canvas with his knife, and De Winter was dragged through the slit.

It marks the respect in which De Winter was held by his men that, as he walked to the side of the *Vryheid,* a prisoner—the first Dutch admiral who had ever surrendered on the deck of his own ship—many of his officers and crew fell on their knees, with tears running down their faces, to take leave of him.

The Dutch second in command, Admiral Story, succeeded in reaching the shelter of the Texel with a few battered ships, and he described the battle as "one of the most obstinate engagements perhaps that ever took place on the ocean." The state of the two fleets justified that description. The captured ships were so torn and rent with shot that they were mere wrecks, not worth carrying to England except as trophies. Two of them, indeed, sunk even in that short voyage. Every prize was dismasted. The British ships emerged from the combat, in the main, with their spars standing and their canvas untorn, as

the Dutch fired only at the hulls of their enemy, but the British hulls were rent well-nigh as cruelly by shot as the Dutch ships themselves. But the victory was decisive. Only seven ships out of the whole Dutch fleet escaped, and the naval strength of Holland was finally broken. De Winter himself was carried a prisoner to England, and it marks both his Dutch phlegm and the equal Scottish coolness of his victor that, on the evening of the engagement, they played a friendly rubber of whist together in Duncan's cabin. De Winter was beaten, upon which he observed with a smile, "It is rather hard to be beaten twice in one day by the same opponent."

Duncan took his victory with characteristic sobriety. According to Ralfe, after the action was over, he, in presence of the Dutch admiral, called all his crew on deck, and with faces still blackened with the smoke of the fight, they knelt, admiral and seamen together, on the shot-torn planks, and offered thanksgiving to God for the victory. In England the news of the battle was received with overwhelming joy. It was not merely that one more triumph was added to British naval records. The shadow of threatened invasion had vanished. The loyalty as well as the fighting qualities of the British fleet had been triumphantly demonstrated.

Every city throughout Great Britain was lit with rejoicing fires. A public subscription, started in

London for the relief of the families of those who had fallen in action, ran up almost in a day to more than £50,000. The *Times* of that date gravely calculated that the amount of liquor expended in drinking the health of Admiral Duncan and his sailors would, on a moderate estimate, increase the beer and spirit duties alone by £5000! A solemn thanksgiving service was held in St. Paul's. A feature in the procession was an artillery waggon, drawn by four horses and escorted by a strong body of seamen, carrying the French flags taken during the war. A second artillery waggon followed, similarly escorted, crowded with Spanish flags from St. Vincent. Then came a third artillery waggon, with its guard of sailors from Duncan's fleet, carrying captured Dutch flags. If those were stern and trying days for Great Britain, at least they were proud days too.

Duncan was sixty-six years of age when Camperdown was fought; but, as a quite competent judge, Sir Charles Napier, said, "The only case of a man between sixty or seventy fighting an action which a younger man would not have done better, was Camperdown!"

PERIOD III

BONAPARTE IN THE EAST

PERIOD III.—BONAPARTE IN THE EAST

(*From the Treaty of Campo Formio, October* 17, 1797, *to the Capitulation of the French in Egypt, September* 2, 1801.)

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1798.	Jan.	6. All goods of British manufacture seized in France.
	Feb.	10. French under Berthier enter Rome—Republic proclaimed.
	Mar.	Rebellion in Ireland.
	,,	19. French troops enter Switzerland.
	May	12. Sir Sydney Smith escapes from Temple.
	,,	19. Bonaparte sails for Egypt.
	,,	,, Canal at Ostend destroyed by British.
	,,	24. Ireland under martial law.
	,,	25. Havre bombarded by Sir Richard Strachan.
	,,	28. San Domingo evacuated by English; great loss by disease.
	June	12. Malta taken by Bonaparte.
	July	1. Bonaparte lands in Egypt—Takes Alexandria (July 5).
	,,	21. Battle of the Pyramids.
	,,	23. Capture of Cairo by the French.
	Aug.	1. Battle of the Nile.
	,,	6. Defeat of Mamelukes by Bonaparte.
	,,	22. Humbert lands in Ireland—Defeats General Lake (Aug. 27)—Surrenders to Lord Cornwallis (Sept. 8).
	Oct.	12. Warren captures French squadron.

1798. Nov. 3. Naples and Sardinia begin hostilities against France.
,, 15. Minorca captured by Stuart.
Dec. 3. Pitt's income-tax 10 per cent.
1799. Jan. 24. Naples taken by French—Parthenopean Republic proclaimed.
Feb. 12. War with Austria—Bernadotte and Jourdan cross Rhine—Massena invades Switzerland.
Mar. 5. French defeated at Verona.
,, 21. Holland blockaded.
,, 30. Sir Sydney Smith at Acre.
April 2. Archduke Charles defeats Jourdan.
,, 14. Suwarroff in Italy.
May 4. Seringapatam taken.
,, 17. Suwarroff defeats Moreau.
July 26. Bonaparte defeats Turks at Aboukir.
Aug. 16. Suwarroff defeats Joubert.
,, 23. Surinam taken from Dutch—Bonaparte leaves Egypt.
Sept. 13. Duke of York in Holland.
,, 19. Battle of Alkmen.
,, 24. Massena repulses Suwarroff.
Oct. 9. Bonaparte lands in Frejus.
,, 20. Duke of York capitulates in Holland.
Nov. 9. Revolution of 18th Brumaire—Directory overthrown — Bonaparte, Sieyès, and Duclos Consuls.
1800. Jan. 25. Act of Union with Ireland passed.
Feb. 17. Irish House of Commons passes Act of Union.
May 16. French advance-guard crosses Alps.
June 5. Massena surrenders Genoa.
,, 14. Battle of Marengo.
Sept. 5. Malta taken by English.
Nov. 3. Defeat of Austrians at Hohenlinden—Emperor Paul lays embargo on 300 British ships.

1800. Dec. 31. Union between Great Britain and Ireland takes effect.

1801. Jan. 16. Armistice between France and Austria.

Feb. 9. Treaty of Luneville—The Rhine and Adige French boundaries.

Mar. 4. Rupture of England with Baltic Powers.

,, 8. Sir Ralph Abercromby lands in Egypt.

,, 10. Aboukir surrendered to English.

,, 17. Change of British Ministry—Addington succeeds Pitt.

,, 21. Victory of English at Alexandria.

,, 23. Emperor Paul murdered—British fleet under Sir Hyde Parker and Nelson pass Sound.

April 2. Battle of Copenhagen—Danish fleet taken or destroyed.

,, 3. Prussia seizes Hanover.

June 1. Embargo taken off ships of Russia, Denmark, and Sweden.

July 6. Sir James Saumarez at Algeciras.

Aug. 5. Nelson bombards Boulogne, where flotilla for invasion of England is gathering.

,, 15. Nelson attacks French flotilla.

Sept. 2. French surrender Alexandria and abandon Egypt.

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HOUSE AT AJACCIO, CORSICA, IN WHICH NAPOLEON BONAPARTE WAS BORN

PERIOD III

BONAPARTE IN THE EAST

CHAPTER I

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

IN the little town of Ajaccio, in Corsica, there still stands a white-walled ancient-looking house, resembling, with its rows of plain windows, nothing so much as a small country warehouse left stranded by the ebbing tide of trade. In 1784, under the roof of that prosaic building, played and wrangled the most remarkable group of children the world at that moment held. The eldest was sixteen years old, the youngest a baby. They were Corsican children in appearance, exactly like any other group to be found at that moment on the rugged and savage island—olive-skinned, black-browed, shrill-tongued, quarrelsome, vehement alike in love and in hate. It was a poverty-smitten household in an island scarcely touched by the currents of the world's life.

Yet in that cluster of shrill-voiced children were forces which changed the current of the world's history. Three of these Corsican lads were destined to become kings, the fourth an emperor; one of

the girls was to wear a queen's crown, two were to become princesses. There was more of potential royalty, in brief, under that roof of Corsican tiles than under any palace roof in Europe. And the centre of it all was the second boy in the group, who, under the latest form his name took, Napoleon Bonaparte, will live for all time.

The Bonapartes were of an Italian stock transplanted to Corsican soil, and both Corsica and Italy contributed some special elements to the character of the future ruler of France. Corsica gave him his vehemence of will, his strain of savagery; Italy his genius and subtlety. Bonaparte is usually accepted as the product and representative of the Revolution, as he certainly was, in a sense, its political heir; but nothing could well be more remote from truth than this theory. His French nationality itself was a sort of legal fiction, created by the fact that two months before he was born (August 15, 1769), Corsica became a French department. There is, however, a curious conflict of documents on the point, and at least some reason exists for believing that the date assigned to his birth was altered so as to make him eligible, in point of age, when admitted to the military school of Brienne. But in blood, and speech, and character the youthful Bonaparte was in no sense French. And he passed through his military training, grew to manhood, and, until he was twenty-six years of age, was in

sympathy as remote from the Revolution as though he had belonged to another planet.

He himself records that, being in Paris on August 10, 1792, when the mob assailed the Tuileries, his comment was, "How could the king let the rascals in! He should have shot down a few hundred, and the rest would have run." "I felt," he told Bourrienne, long afterwards, "as if I should have defended the king if called to do so. I was opposed to those who would found the Republic by means of the populace."

The truth is, that for the first twenty-two years of his life, Bonaparte was wholly a Corsican, and not in the least a Frenchman. "I was born when my country was sinking," he wrote to Paoli, in 1789, when he was playing the part of a Corsican patriot; "the cries of the dying, the groans of the oppressed, and the tears of despair surrounded my cradle from my birth!" There is a grain of truth in this. The state of Corsica during those early years might well stir the passionate nature of a Corsican boy. But Bonaparte wrote those sentences during that brief stage in his career when he dreamed of finding a field for his ambition in Corsica; later his speech takes a very different complexion.

Bonaparte entered the military school at Brienne when ten years old, as a cadet. When he left Brienne, his certificate summed up his character in three words: "Masterful, impetuous, headstrong."

"Capricious, haughty, extremely disposed to egoism," runs another record. "Would make an excellent sailor," says one of his inspectors—about the worst guess of which even a school inspector was ever guilty! According to Sir William Fraser, however, the youthful Bonaparte at one time actually contemplated becoming a sailor and joining the British navy! When he was at Brienne, an English lad named Lawley, afterwards Lord Wenlock, was his school-fellow. "One day," says Sir William Fraser, "the little Corsican came to his school-mate and showed him a letter addressed to the British Admiralty, requesting permission to enter our navy. 'The difficulty, I am afraid,' said Bonaparte, 'will be my religion!' Lawley replied, 'You young rascal! I don't believe you have any religion at all.' 'But my family have!' answered Bonaparte."

No one suspects Bonaparte, at any stage of his career, of possessing any sense of humour; yet there is a flavour of exquisite humour in the spectacle of the future hero of Marengo and of Austerlitz only restrained from offering his services to the British navy as a midshipman by the fear that his "religion" might prove a difficulty! Fraser says the letter was sent, and probably lies to-day in some dusty pigeonhole in the British Admiralty.

Bonaparte himself at St. Helena told Sir Pulteney Malcolm how Paoli urged him to enter the English army, and offered to procure him a commission.

"I preferred the French," Bonaparte explained, "because I spoke their language, was of their religion, understood and liked their manners, and I thought the beginning of a revolution a fine time for an enterprising young man." If we dismiss the highly dubious element of "their religion" from this catalogue of reasons which prevented Bonaparte wearing a British uniform, what is left? Nothing that represents patriotism or conviction. This very "enterprising young man" simply wanted "a fine time," and thought the confusion of "a revolution" gave him the best chance of securing it. He was, at bottom, a mercenary, willing to sell his sword to the highest bidder.

At sixteen years of age Bonaparte became a lieutenant in the regiment La Fere. His training, therefore, was wholly military; yet, curiously enough, he showed no passion for soldiership, and during the years betwixt 1785–91 he probably spent as much time with his family at Ajaccio as at the headquarters of his regiment. And the ambition for which in later years the world was a stage too small, found an ample field for itself on the petty arena of Corsican politics.

On that stage, and while yet an artillery subaltern, Bonaparte displayed all the qualities which afterwards made him the terror and admiration of the world—the restlessness, the ambition, the audacity, the readiness to ally himself with any party, and

to abandon it; to assume any political creed which would suit his interests, or to change it. He was ready to head the patriots against France, to lead the French against the patriots, or to do both things in succession, so long as he might lead something. He secured his election as major of the National Guards at Ajaccio by a *coup d'état*, which differed only in scale, not in the least in method or spirit, from that which in after years overthrew the Directory. He twice tried to seize Ajaccio itself by force, but in those crude and youthful efforts he, somehow, had not the art of succeeding.

He had forfeited his French commission by outstaying his leave in Corsica, and, his stroke at the Corsican authorities having missed, he had to flee from the island. "A rebel in Corsica, a deserter in France," to quote Seeley, whither could he betake himself? It seemed as if at that moment he had no country, no citizenship, and no career. Corsica had cast him out; he hated France. He had tried literature and politics, and failed in both. He was a soldier without either enthusiasm or distinction. He had quenchless desires, an ambition that stung him like a gadfly, and a vague sense of illimitable capacity; but he had no convictions, no patriotism, and no conscience. What future lay before him?

This was in 1792. The second Revolution, however, at that moment broke out; the National Convention made itself supreme, and in the con-

fusion Bonaparte escaped punishment, and even had his commission restored. He had now to choose his party amongst the distracted groups which were then contending for supremacy in Paris. He attached himself to the Mountain, adopted the speech of a Terrorist, became the protégé of the younger Robespierre, and narrowly escaped sharing his fate when the recoil from the Terror sent both the Robespierres to the guillotine. Probably the sympathy Bonaparte felt for any form of vehement power made him carry his allegiance, such as it was, to the Jacobin camp. Bonaparte's gloomy, fierce, but powerful intellect, however, had made a vivid impression on the younger Robespierre, and won him an opportunity of distinction at Toulon. Carteaux, an artist who had exchanged painting for politics, commanded the army besieging that place; his successor in the command was a doctor, who had never succeeded in winning patients, and, in the perplexed counsels of such amateur generals, Bonaparte's expert knowledge as an artillery officer and his natural genius for war made him instantly a power.

After the capture of Toulon, Bonaparte was promoted to the rank of general of artillery and joined the army of Italy. But on July 28, 1794, the Robespierres perished, and as Bonaparte was described as their "plan-maker," he was arrested and ordered to appear before the Committee of Public Safety in Paris. Had that order been carried out,

Bonaparte's head would probably have fallen under the shear of the guillotine. Friendly influence, however, saved him. He was released, renounced the overthrown Jacobins with the same agile celerity he had shown in renouncing the Corsican patriots; for Bonaparte was always piously anxious to imitate Providence—or rather the French version of Providence—and be on the side of the strongest battalions! He was appointed to the army in the West, but evaded going there. On that sterile field no laurels were to be reaped! He was then attached to the Topographical section of the War Office; grew tired of it, and applied for permission to enter the Turkish service. Then there came suddenly, and in domestic convulsion, the opportunity of his life.

The National Convention, which had governed France for nearly three years, had framed a new constitution for the Republic, but had decreed that two-thirds of its own number should be members, without election, of the first Corps Legislatif under the new system. The Parisian Sections by way of protest rose in rebellion, and the Convention prepared to defend itself by arms. Barras was named commander, and asked that Bonaparte might be his second.

Bonaparte himself has told the story of how, listening to the debate in the Convention, he heard his own name proposed. "My little Corsican officer," in Barras's words, "will not stand on ceremony;" and he tells us he deliberated for half-an-hour as to what

he should do. He was balancing the two parties and their chances of success in the scales of his shrewd and matchless judgment. He cast in his lot with the Convention, used his guns with skill the next day, and, having won the battle for his employers, received as a reward the command of the army of Italy. Two days before he set out to assume his new command—on March 9, 1796—he married Josephine de Beauharnais. The days of uncertainty and failure were past. He had gained at a step a wife, a career, and an assured social position.

There is no need to describe the meteoric brilliancy of that Italian campaign. A great soldier, a soldier of the scale of Hannibal or of Cæsar, became at once visible to the world. He was pitted against the confederated armies of Austria and Sardinia; within eleven days the alliance was shattered as with the stroke of a thunderbolt, the Austrians were driven back in hopeless retreat, the Sardinians sued for an armistice. A fortnight later Bonaparte entered Milan as a conqueror. He overthrew the Austrian armies again, captured Mantua, and compelled the Papal Government to sign a treaty of peace. Operations began on March 27, 1796; on April 7, 1797, Napoleon had overrun Italy, struck down the military strength of Austria, and was dictating terms of peace within ninety miles of Vienna. It was war on new methods, tireless, audacious, unorthodox; breathless in its speed, fierce in its energy, sudden

and lightning-like in its strokes. It was clear that a military genius of the first order had arisen to lead the armies of France.

But Bonaparte's first Italian campaign is almost more suggestive as a revelation of his character than even as a proof of his soldierly genius. Bonaparte, it showed, had no more morals than a pickpocket, and he conducted his campaign in the spirit of a pickpocket. He issued a proclamation to his army when the campaign began. "Soldiers," he said, "you are hungry and nearly naked. . . . I am come to lead you into the most fertile plains in the world. There you will find rich provinces and great towns. There you will find glory, honour, and riches. Soldiers of Italy, can your courage fail you?" Plunder, in a word, was substituted for patriotism, in Bonaparte's vernacular, booty for brotherhood. So far had the Revolution travelled since 1793! Seeley says that by this promise of unlimited plunder, the French soldier under Bonaparte received at the same time "a touch of the wolf," which made him irresistible; and "a touch of the mercenary," which made him a fit tool for Bonaparte's after-use.

Certainly Bonaparte carried out that programme of plunder with extraordinary thoroughness. To the unfortunate Italians themselves he announced he came as their "deliverer," with shining gifts of liberty and fraternity. But the astonished Italians speedily found that their "emancipation" was only another

name for being ruined. A fever for pillage burned throughout Bonaparte's army. It spread through all ranks. It ran to all excesses. Never was such an army of combined thieves and heroes. Cities were plundered of their treasures, picture-galleries of their canvases, churches of their very bells.

At the very moment Bonaparte was issuing proclamations of "fraternity" to the duchies of Parma, Modena, Piacenza, &c., he was privately instructing his agents to "prepare detailed lists of all the paintings, statues, objects of art," &c., these States possessed, that he might carry them off. Every Italian State, in turn, had to pay ransom. "Natives of Italy," ran Bonaparte's proclamations, "the French army has come to break your chains." Translated into French practice, that meant, "We have come to pick your pockets, plunder your arsenals, steal your very pictures!" Privately Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, "When you have received this, and what will be sent from Rome, we shall have almost everything fine in Italy, except a few objects which are at Turin and Naples." Parma had to hand over 2,000,000 francs and twenty paintings; Modena 10,000,000 francs and twenty of its best paintings; Lombardy, 20,000,000 francs with all its paintings and works of art. "Lombardy," Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, "is entirely exhausted by five years of war, . . . but we shall be able to levy 20,000,000 francs from it." Carriage-

horses were treated as "works of art," and the youthful general of the Republic sent a hundred of the finest as a present to the Directory, "to replace," he wrote, "the middling horses now harnessed in your carriages." "Republican simplicity," it is plain, had emigrated, with a good many other Republican virtues! Bonaparte quarrelled with Venice, and wrote to the Directory, "I have purposely devised this sort of rupture, in case you wish to obtain 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 francs from Venice." From Rome itself Napoleon exacted 21,000,000 francs, 100 pictures, 500 manuscripts, and many statues.

Now these transactions were not part of the strategy of war, and necessary to warlike success. They were mere experiments in plunder, and exactly on a level with the thefts of a burglar. But they included some elements of baseness not usually found in even the ethics of larceny. Bonaparte disguised the performances of a bandit under the phrases of a philanthropist. He used all the cant of Republican virtue, and talked about "liberty" and "fraternity," about "ancient friendship" and a coming millennium, while he was occupied in stealing all the portable wealth of Italy. Never was lying so magnificent or on such a scale as that practised by Bonaparte in Italy at this period. Thus he wrote to the Pope that the Republic was "his truest friend," that "all Europe was aware of His Holiness's virtues." "I send

my aide-de-camp," he wrote, "to express all the esteem and veneration which I entertain for your person." The day before he had written to Joubert, "I am in treaty with these black coats, and this time St. Peter will save the Capitol by giving up some of his finest statues and money." On the very day his aide-de-camp bore to the Pope his assurances of "esteem and veneration," Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, "Rome cannot exist. . . . Once deprived of Bologna, Ferrara, and the Romagna, and the 30,000,000 which we take from her, the old machine will fall to pieces when left all alone."

The partition of Poland might almost be described as a virtuous deed when compared with Bonaparte's treatment of Venice. He entered its territories with loud proclamations of friendship; he came, he declared, for the purpose of delivering it from the chains of Austrian tyranny. He carefully plundered unhappy Venice of its wealth and art treasures, and then traded it back again to Austria in the negotiations of Campo Formio as a consideration for concessions to France in the Low Countries. And Bonaparte, it must be remembered, claimed to be the "liberator of Italy!" It may tickle the sour humour of a cynic to remember that it was over these very performances that Carnot was pronouncing in Paris, at that very moment, the famous oration, "Oh, humanity! How delightful is thy practice, and how much to be pitied the selfish soul that knows nothing of thee!"

Never, indeed, did any invader use finer words and do baser deeds than Napoleon. Seeley says that Bonaparte "did not invent partitions." Were there not three partitions of Poland before his day? The answer is that Bonaparte invented a new disguise for partitions. He described them as triumphs of "fraternity;" he executed them in the name of "brotherhood." It may be true, as his apologists urge, that Bonaparte was only applying to Venice the methods Russia, Prussia, and Austria applied to Poland. But at least the sovereigns of those States did not assure the unfortunate Poles whom they were enslaving that they came as their "liberators." They did not steal provinces and cities—still less pictures and statues—in the name of "fraternity and the rights of man."

It is not merely that Bonaparte stole like a pickpocket and lied like a card-sharper, but that he did it as an exercise in the pieties of republican virtue. He wrote to his agent in Corfu, "If the inhabitants are inclined for independence, flatter their taste, and do not fail in the different proclamations you issue to refer to Greece, Athens, and Rome." No one ever used the names of ancient virtues to cover modern villainy with half the art of Bonaparte. "These apostles of republican virtues," says Lanfrey, "trafficked in the rights of nations as if the bargain related to cattle." And they always assumed airs of superior political virtue while doing it. "As for what was good to say in proclamations and printed speeches," Bonaparte said

privately, "that was mere romance." After an interview with a cluster of bishops, he announced, "I felt in talking with these good men as if we were back again in the first centuries of the Church." Privately he described these prelates as "twaddling dotards."

Bonaparte, it may be added, while plundering Italy as Cæsar never plundered Gaul or Pompey the East, assumed more and more the air of an independent conqueror. He made and broke treaties almost at pleasure. He set up royal state; he alternately cajoled the Directory, bullied it, or ignored it.

At this stage Bonaparte himself was a mystery to France. At the great festival which marked his return to Paris in 1797, his entrance was waited for with fixed and unbreathing curiosity. When he came, says Lanfrey, "his short stature, the pallor of his face, his feverish, sickly aspect, his profile—the type of a foreign race . . . everything about him was unexpected, extraordinary, and calculated to strike every imagination." The personal characteristics of Bonaparte are familiar now to the world: the cliff-like brow, the suspicious, challenging eyes, the clear-cut face, the profile as of Cæsar or of some ancient cameo; the undersized body, with its curiously mingled air of both weakness and strength; the abrupt speech, the caressing manner that at a breath could become a menace; the temper so violent and yet that could be used like a convenient tool. Madame de Remusat, the close friend

of Josephine, studied Bonaparte with the eyes of a woman, and of a Frenchwoman, and her description of his personal appearance, though written in dainty characters, is traced in acid.

"Napoleon Bonaparte," she says, "is of low stature and ill-made; the upper part of his body is too long in proportion to his legs. He has thin chestnut hair, his eyes are greyish-blue, and his skin, which was yellow while he was slight, has become of late years a dead white, without any colour." His forehead, the setting of his eyes, the line of his nose, all were striking. "His eyes were ordinarily dull; when angry, his aspect became fierce and menacing." He was "an habitually ill-tempered man," fond, oddly enough, of Ossian, of the twilight, of melancholy music. "He did not know," says Madame de Remusat, with a drop of feminine gall, "how either to enter or to leave a room, how to bow, how to rise, or how to sit down. Whatever language he speaks, it always sounds like a foreign tongue."

Meneval says that Bonaparte was only five feet two inches high, but the big head and broad shoulders gave him an appearance of greater stature than he really possessed. Meneval was Napoleon's private secretary, and his "Memoirs" are a sort of hymn of praise to the Emperor; but he says that "when excited by any violent passion, the face of Napoleon assumed a terrible expression. A sort of rotary movement very visibly produced itself on his

forehead and between his eyebrows; his nostrils dilated and became swollen." But Napoleon seemed to be able to control these explosions at pleasure. His anger, as he said, "never went higher than his throat."

It may be doubted whether even yet the world has assessed Napoleon at his true moral value. His intellect still dazzles mankind; his genius for war terrifies it. He is, indeed, not usually judged by any ethical standard; he himself declared such tests did not apply to him. Morality, he boldly argued, was not intended for the class of men to which he belonged. "I am not a person," he said; "I am a thing," a fact, a force, that is; which, like the great facts and forces of nature, is its own rule and justification. And the world has, somehow, more than half accepted that convenient theory. Yet, for great men as for small men, the moral test is authoritative and absolute; it is the only one that really counts. Great genius does not make great wickedness less hateful, but rather more, for it increases the mischief of its consequences and the corrupting power of its example.

And what is the character of Bonaparte as, at this stage of his career, and against the shining background of his Italian victories, he stands for the first time fully revealed to the gaze of the world, a born conqueror and ruler of men, his mighty duel with England just beginning? He had a nature on the intellectual side amazingly great, on the moral side,

curiously base. All the great words which kindle the imagination and shape the careers of other men —patriotism, religion, conscience, honour, duty—had no meaning for him. They were not laws to be obeyed, but only convenient tools to be used, and to be used like loaded dice in a card-sharper's hand—to trick other people. "He turned liberty aside," says Madame de Remusat; "he bewildered all parties, he falsified all meanings, he outraged reason, he perverted language, to lead us astray."

Bonaparte had no patriotism, for he had no fatherland. In his will he declared he "loved France;" but then, to his own imagination, he was himself France! The French people were only pawns on the chessboard of his ambitions. He had no religion, or rather he had all religions. He was a free-thinker at Paris, a Catholic at Rome, a Mohammedan at Cairo. In his proclamations in Egypt he announced he was a messenger from God sent to overthrow the Cross and exalt the Crescent. Duty, for him, was an unintelligible conception. As for honour, we have only to remember that, with a genuine touch of the Corsican, he bequeathed 10,000 francs in his will to the man who tried to assassinate Wellington. "His methods of government," says Madame de Remusat, "were all selected from among those which have a tendency to debase men. 'A cowardly act,' he said once, 'what does that matter to me? I should not fail to commit one, if it were useful to me. In

reality, there is nothing really noble or base in this world.'" Moral distinctions, that is, did not exist for him! "In his case," says Madame de Remusat, "the heart was left out; he was never influenced by any sentiment of affection." Whom, as a matter of fact, did Bonaparte love? To what party did he belong? What cause did he represent?

France, for Bonaparte, was a tool to be used, not a fatherland to be fought for. What he thought of women is amply shown in the volumes which describe his private life. His single virtue, perhaps, was his love for his family; yet that was an affection of a fierce and quarrelsome quality, which scarcely came into the category of virtue. He tells us himself that, "as a child, nothing awed me; I feared no one. I struck one, I scratched another, I was a terror to everybody. It was my brother Joseph with whom I had most to do; he was beaten, bitten, scolded, and I had put the blame on him almost before he knew what he was about; was telling tales about him almost before he had begun to know himself."

That bit of self-description gives a true vision of Bonaparte's character. How pitiless he could be—pitiless as frost or ice—a hundred incidents prove. Before he had fought one of his great battles, and while yet, that is, unhardened by war, he has told us how he once ordered a perfectly useless and hopeless attack which cost many lives, merely that he might show his mistress of the moment "what an engagement looked like!"

But, by a sure and eternal law, outraged morality, in the long run, avenges itself. Bonaparte certainly reaped to the full the bitter harvest of his own quarrel with righteousness. He was "so false" that he "partly took himself for true." He almost came to believe, that is, his own bulletins. He thought he could change facts by changing their names. So towards the end of his career he lost his clearness of vision, his sure touch of realities. He was, perhaps, the most naked worshipper of self the world has known: he measured other men's rights by the standard of his mere will; he counted all the noblest things of life—love, friendship, truth, religion, the happiness of the race—as mere sand-grains when weighed against what he held to be his "glory." But as the penalty for this, love and friendship failed him. His glory perished. The nations he despised rose up against him. He left France smaller and weaker than he found it, and he died a crownless exile and prisoner.

But to a moral character such as we have described, Bonaparte added a range, and strength, and swiftness of intellect, an energy of will, a power of swaying men, scarcely to be paralleled in human records. He has been called "the spiritual heir of the Revolution;" but he certainly never served himself heir to the principles of the Revolution. "Heir of the Revolution!" How exactly Napoleon inverted the Revolution is shown by the fact that the first revolutionary campaigns represented, in substance, a rising of the

nationalities against their rulers, while Napoleon was finally ruined by the revolt of the nationalities against himself. "I did not understand much about the Revolution," he said, long afterwards, "but I approved of it. Equality, which was to elevate myself, attracted me." "What caused the Revolution?" he again asked. "Vanity!" "What will end it? Vanity again! Liberty is a pretext; equality is your hobby." "Yet," Madame de Remusat, with unconscious satire, adds, "Bonaparte frequently declared that he alone was the whole Revolution, and he at length persuaded himself that in his own person he preserved all of it which it would not be well to destroy."

But Bonaparte certainly became the possessor of the terrible military force the Revolution had called into existence. All the fierce energies set loose by the Revolution, it must be remembered, had begun to flow in a military channel before Bonaparte stepped on the stage. The Republic had shattered the first coalition, had widened the boundaries of France, had shaken the whole Germanic system almost to its fall, before Bonaparte brought to its service his matchless genius for war. The martial triumphs won by Revolutionary France under the fiery energy of Jacobin rule makes up, as Professor Sloane says, "an almost incredible tale." The army of the Republic, tempered and hardened in actual war, had become the greatest force in the Europe of

that day. Bonaparte did not make it; he had only to use it, and change it into an army of conquest.

That the Revolution would develop into a military despotism was inevitable. The Legislature destroyed itself. The army had, within the circle of the nation, no force greater than itself and capable of controlling it. If Napoleon had not become the head of the State, some other successful soldier—Bernadotte or Moreau—would have arisen. Being head of the State, despotic by nature, and a despot by force of circumstances, Bonaparte was able to command absolutely, by the impulse of his single will, the whole strength of France, and of those States which, one after another, became tributary to France.

Thus, when he was only twenty-seven years of age, Bonaparte steps on to the European stage, a great military genius by nature, a soldier by training, his brain haunted by dreams of universal empire, his purposes without moral restraint, and having at his bidding the whole military energy of a nation, martial in type, and through whose veins the heady wine of the Revolution was flowing in an intoxicating tide. The story of Europe for the next eighteen years finds its centre in this single amazing figure, whose utmost energy was expended in the attempt to destroy England.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

THE treaty of Campo Formio left England without an ally, with the insignificant exception of Portugal; and against her, as its one remaining foe, the sole obstacle in the path of universal empire, the whole strength of France was now turned. England made the most earnest efforts to bring the war to a close. She was as supreme on the seas as France was on the land; but in October 1796 she had offered to give up all her colonial conquests if France would restore Lombardy and the Netherlands to Austria, and conclude a general peace. During the negotiations at Leoben in 1797, Pitt again sent Lord Malmesbury on an errand of peace, but once more in vain. It was the policy of the Directory to make terms with Austria, and then turn its whole strength on Great Britain. Bonaparte vehemently urged this plan on the Directory. "Either our Government," he wrote, "must destroy the English monarchy, or must expect to be itself destroyed by the corruption and intrigue of these active islanders. The present moment offers us a

fine game. Let us concentrate all our activity on the navy, and destroy England. That done, Europe is at our feet."

So the treaty of Campo Formio was arranged. Belgium was ceded to France; Venice fell as booty to Austria; the Cisalpine Republic, the creature and tool of France, was set up; Corfu and its sister islands were claimed by France, and became the French outposts in the Mediterranean. The ground was thus cleared for a final and overwhelming attack on England.

There were, as Bonaparte himself advised the Directory, three ways of striking at England: by direct invasion; by attacking Hanover; or by striking at India through Egypt. Of these three schemes Bonaparte himself held the first to be too perilous; the second was too insignificant; the third was the true policy to be adopted. The Directory, however, chose the first plan, and Bonaparte, for a time, apparently accepted their judgment. He assumed the command of the "Army of England," and seemed to be absorbed in making preparations at Dunkirk and at Brest for a descent on English or Irish shores. But in reality, Bonaparte was bent on an expedition to the East, and this for many reasons. While England held command of the Channel, he believed that an expedition to Ireland was an adventure too desperate to be undertaken. The East, he was convinced, was for England the one vulner-

able spot. The British had practically abandoned the Mediterranean, and "truly to destroy England," Bonaparte wrote to the Directory, "we should seize Egypt." Corfu was already French; if Malta could be seized, the whole Mediterranean would fall under French control. From Malta to Egypt was but a step, and Egypt was the door to India. The conception of the seizure of Egypt was not new. Leibnitz suggested it to Louis XIV. as a blow against the trade of Holland. It was plain, alike to Leibnitz and Louis XIV., as to Bonaparte and the Directory, that through Egypt lay the shortest trade route to the East, and the power that grasped it would control the commerce of that rich realm.

But the East, with its wealth, its mystery, its strange records, its wrecks of ancient civilisation, strongly appealed to the romantic and dreamy side of Bonaparte's intellect. There great empires had risen like exhalations and fled like shadows. There were vast populations, cities hoary with antiquity, despotisms ancient and helpless, waiting to be overthrown well-nigh with a breath. Europe, said Bonaparte, was "a mere mole-hill." His strong-winged imagination flew from Corfu to Malta, from Malta to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Constantinople. He would return to Europe, as he himself said, by Adrianople and Vienna. If at twenty-seven he had conquered Italy, by the time he was thirty-seven why should he not have con-

quered the East, and then, in turn, use the docile myriads of the East to overthrow the West?

These were gigantic dreams; but the cells of Bonaparte's brain found ample room for them. His keen but brooding intellect shaped the plan for turning these glittering visions into still more glittering realities. And Bonaparte's intellect, it may be added, even when it seemed to be filled with mere opium-flavoured dreams, never lost its touch of practical affairs. He meant to rule France; but he was satisfied that, to use his own phrase, "the pear was not yet ripe." The Directory had just made itself supreme, and it must have time to discredit itself, to make blunders at home, and to suffer disasters abroad, before it could be thrust aside. And Bonaparte could not wait. To wait was to run the risk of being forgotten. "They recollect nothing at Paris," he said; "if I remain long without doing something else, I am lost. On my third appearance at the theatre they would cease to look at me." "Believe me," said Barras to him, "it is good advice I give you. Leave the country as soon as you can."

Bonaparte was no Frenchman, but he thoroughly understood the French character. So the expedition to the East was decided upon, and preparations were made for it with amazing energy and on a gigantic scale. England must be hoodwinked; so Bonaparte himself remained apparently inactive at Paris. The Spanish fleet at Cadiz was made to show signs of

moving, and thus occupied the British blockading fleet. French ports were full of preparations for some great enterprise which could not be concealed; but it was diligently whispered that it was levelled against England itself, and this idea was strengthened by the appearance of great activity at Brest. So little, indeed, was the real French plan suspected, that up to the beginning of April 1798, not a single British line-of-battle ship was in the Mediterranean. The whole naval strength of Great Britain was concentrated in the Channel, or off Cadiz, to guard against an invasion which was not really contemplated, and the field was left open for Bonaparte's adventure.

Money, however, had to be provided for the great enterprise, and the manner in which it was found illustrates the spirit and method of French politics. The Pope and the Swiss Republic were both known to have considerable funds, and a quarrel was promptly picked with both. Their wealth was their crime. They were guilty of possessing money which the Republic desired to possess. The expedition to Rome was entrusted to Berthier, the invasion of Switzerland to Brune. "In sending me to Rome," wrote Berthier to Bonaparte, "you appoint me treasurer to the English expedition. I will endeavour to fill the chest." And Berthier, to do him justice, "filled the chest" with great vigour. Rome was squeezed like an orange. The French agents,

according to Professor Sloane, "stripped Pius VI., the aged and feeble Pope, of all his jewels. His very rings were drawn from his fingers by their hands." As for Brune, he plundered the treasure-chest at Berne of 16,000,000 francs in gold, while from that thrifty and frugal republic he carried off arms, ammunition, and stores in value equal to another 16,000,000 francs. In his Memoirs, Bonaparte is piously indignant over the occupation of Rome and the invasion of Switzerland; but his correspondence proves that he personally directed both operations, and undertook them both in the interests of his Egyptian expedition. The instructions to both Berthier and Brune still exist in his own handwriting.

As he had practically the whole resources of France to draw upon, Bonaparte included in his expedition every element of strength. He filled the ranks of his soldiers with veterans from all the armies of the Republic; he carried with him the most brilliant of the younger officers—Desaix, Kleber, Lannes, Murat, Marmont, Junot. He had under his flag 40,000 seasoned and gallant soldiers; and, as he was about not merely to invade a country, but to found an empire, he carried with him nearly a hundred artists, savants, engineers, &c., the very flower of French science. The expedition assembled at four points—Toulon, Genoa, Corsica, and Civita Vecchia—and the whole fleet consisted of 400 transports guarded by 15 ships of the line, 15 frigates,

and 37 armed corvettes, brigs, &c. No other expedition equally vast in scale and formidable in strength had ever set sail from a French port. Bonaparte reviewed his troops the day before he embarked, reminded them of the wealth and glory they had won in Italy, told them they were sailing to win a new fame, and even vaster booty, and announced that each soldier on his return would receive a sum sufficient to purchase six acres of land. Glittering fame and solid cash! These were the lures Bonaparte dangled before the eyes of his troops as they turned their faces to the East.

The British Cabinet, it is to be noted, had not even faintly guessed the real goal of Bonaparte's expedition. Never, indeed, was a secret better kept. It was after the expedition had actually sailed that the senior naval officer at Toulon wrote to the Minister of Marine, "I know no more of the movements of the squadron than if it did not belong to the Republic." Thus, with vast resources, with the Mediterranean clear before him, and with all his enemies puzzled and deceived, Bonaparte was able to set sail on the greatest and most romantic adventure of his life.

The main body of the expedition set sail from Toulon on April 19, 1798; on the 21st the contingent from Genoa joined; on the 26th, when south of Corsica, the detachment from that island made its appearance. On June 9 Bonaparte was off Malta,

and found the squadron from Civita Vecchia waiting for him, the combined fleet whitening the sea for miles with its sails. Bonaparte's far-reaching combinations had thus succeeded, and, without meeting a hostile sail, the great fleet was in sight of its earliest goal. Malta, with its network of mighty batteries, might have held the French at bay for weeks, but the courage and discipline of the Knights of St. John had long since evaporated. They knew neither how to fight nor how to negotiate. The magic of Bonaparte's good fortune did not fail him. On June 12 the island surrendered—for no particular reason—and the great fleet of 400 vessels, with infinite tumult and confusion, crowded into the harbour. "It is the strongest place in Europe," said Bonaparte, as he gazed at the piled and frowning batteries surrendered to him without a shot. "It was lucky," said one of his generals, "there was somebody within to open the gates for us, or we should never have got in."

Bonaparte left an adequate garrison in the place, and, on June 19, the French expedition, sprawling over many leagues of sea-space, was under sail again for Egypt. Enormous treasures, captured in Malta, were carried away in *L'Orient*, the French flagship, to be dismissed into space, or into the sea, when that ship blew up, eight weeks afterwards, on the night of the battle of the Nile.

CHAPTER III

NELSON IN PURSUIT

MEANWHILE the British Cabinet had become dimly conscious that the Mediterranean was to become, once more, the stage of great events, and it was determined that the British flag should reappear in that sea. Lord St. Vincent—whose strategic gifts had curious limitations, and who was then keeping watch over Cadiz — doubted the wisdom of this policy, but he was overruled. "The appearance of a British squadron in the Mediterranean," Lord Spencer wrote to him, "is a condition on which the fate of Europe may at this moment be said to depend. . . . We are disposed to strain every nerve and to incur considerable hazard in effecting it."

Nelson was accordingly despatched with three ships to keep watch off Toulon, where he met with the roughest weather. On the night of May 20, a bitter tempest was howling over the Gulf of Lyons, and the *Vanguard*, not a good sea-boat, rolled so wildly that her three topmasts snapped, and later in the night her foremast went. When morning broke, the great ship, still rolling in the wild

seas, was little better than a wreck, with Sardinia, its rocky shores a smother of roaring surf, under its lee.

With fine seamanship the *Alexander* took the dismasted flagship in tow, and for two days struggled with it against the mountainous seas rolling shorewards under a westerly gale. Nelson thought the case hopeless, and, determined not to risk both ships, with heroic magnanimity signalled to the *Alexander* to cast off the hawser. The *Alexander*, however, held stubbornly on, and on the 23rd the shattered *Vanguard* and her consorts were at anchor under the lee of the islands of San Pietro. Nelson extracted a moral lesson from the incident. He refused to describe it by "the cold name of accident." "I believe firmly," he wrote with characteristic self-frankness to his wife, "that it was the Almighty's goodness to check my consummate vanity. I hope it has made me a better officer, as I feel confident it has made me a better man. Figure to yourself a vain man, on Sunday evening at sunset, walking in his cabin with a squadron about him who looked up to their chief to lead them to glory, and in whom this chief placed the firmest reliance, that the proudest ships, in equal numbers, belonging to France, would have bowed their flags, and with a very rich prize lying by him. Figure to yourself this proud, conceited man, when the sun rose on Monday morning, his ship dismasted, his fleet dispersed, and himself in

such distress, that the meanest frigate out of France would have been a very unwelcome guest."

Nelson's frigates were blown clean away by the gale; and having caught a glimpse of the wrecked condition of the *Vanguard* before they parted company, concluded that Nelson would run back to Gibraltar to refit, and accordingly bore up for that place. "I thought Hope would have known me better," said Nelson grimly when he learned this. But the loss of those frigates was a disaster that seriously affected the course of history. Frigates are the eyes of a fleet, and it was owing to the loss of his frigates that Nelson, thirty days afterwards, sailed blindly through Bonaparte's huge convoy without seeing it, and so missed the opportunity for which he hungered, of "trying Bonaparte on a wind."

St. Vincent, meanwhile, had received instructions to raise Nelson's squadron to the dimensions of a fleet, and eight line-of-battle ships were despatched from England to take the place off Cadiz of the twelve ships which, under Troubridge, were to join Nelson off Sardinia. St. Vincent executed the manœuvre with characteristic skill. He met the ships from England out of sight of land; they were painted so as to resemble his inshore squadron; the transfer was effected under cover of night, and the Spaniards never knew that the squadron which had so long blockaded them had sailed, and another taken its place.

A despatch-brig, the *Mutine*, on June 5, brought

the tidings to Nelson of his new commission. On the 6th the twelve line-of-battle ships from Cadiz were in sight, and on June 7 began the most wonderful sea-chase in history, with Nelson for hunter and Bonaparte for quarry—a pursuit maintained with tireless ardour, crowded with dramatic incidents, and that found its fiery and resounding climax at the Nile. "I will fight them," Nelson wrote to St. Vincent, "the moment I can reach their fleet, be they at anchor or under sail." And never was a pursuit more fiercely urged than during the next seven weeks. But Nelson had to guess Bonaparte's course, and in this neither St. Vincent nor the British Admiralty gave him any help. St. Vincent was divided in opinion betwixt the Black Sea and Naples; betwixt the invasion of Portugal and a descent upon Ireland. The Admiralty could offer no suggestion at all. Nelson, however, with a seaman's judgment, arguing from the state of the winds and such broken hints of the course of the French as had reached him, guessed their destination must be Malta; but not even yet had Egypt suggested itself to Nelson as Bonaparte's ultimate goal. He surmised that Malta was to be seized as the basis of an attack on Sicily.

Nelson reached Naples on June 17, and learned that the French fleet was at Malta. He pushed for Malta at speed, and on the 22nd, when Sicily was dropping out of sight, a vessel was spoken which gave the news that the French fleet had left Malta

six days before, going east. Nelson now divined Bonaparte's secret aim. "They are going," he wrote Lord Spencer, "on their scheme of possessing Alexandria and getting troops to India." The vessel that gave the news reported that Bonaparte had sailed on the 16th—an error of three days—so that Nelson was left to believe that Bonaparte was six days ahead of him instead of three, and, with every inch of canvas spread, the great English seaman pushed on in his enemy's track. So vehement was Nelson's pursuit that on the night of the 22nd he had actually overtaken the French fleet, and, all unknowing, ran through it.

It was a moonless night; a grey bewildering haze lay on the sea. The French fleet, a straggling mass of 400 great ships, was scattered over leagues of space. Nelson's fleet, fifteen huge, stately, silent ships, in close order, swept on their path; and no gleam of light sparkled in the darkness, no sound of bell or gun crept to the ears of the vigilant British look-outs to warn them of the presence of their enemies. It was here Nelson missed his frigates. Sailing wide on either flank of the close-ordered line-of-battle ships, they could hardly have missed discovering the French. And it can be imagined how, in the morning, Nelson would have struck at his enemy, or how that flock of helpless transports, crowded with 40,000 troops, would have fared under the guns of the British seventy-fours. It is interest-

ing still to read the tactics Nelson intended to employ if he fell in with Napoleon at sea. The British fleet was to be divided into three squadrons; two were to attack Bruyère with his line-of-battle ships, but the third was to fall on the transports and sink and destroy the whole of them. The French army would have perished under these conditions as completely as Pharaoh and his Egyptians in the Red Sea. Bonaparte saw war in many aspects; but its grim visage would have worn a strange and alarming look, such as even Bonaparte hardly dreamed of, if the morning of June 23 had revealed Nelson with fifteen line-of-battle ships to windward!

When morning dawned Nelson had completely overrun his quarry. Some gleam of white sails fretting the horizon behind him might indeed have told his look-outs that the enemy they sought in front was astern of them. But as it happened, no British look-out turned his eyes aft, and Nelson pushed vehemently on. On the 28th he had reached Alexandria. The port was empty. The sleepy East had received no hint of the tempest of war about to break on its drowsy shores from the West. Nelson lingered a few hours, and on June 29 swung round into the teeth of the westerly wind and commenced to beat back to Sicily, skirting the northern shore of the Mediterranean. On the evening of that very day, after the topsails of Nelson's ships had vanished over the sky-line to the west, the eastern horizon

gleamed with what seemed countless lights. It was Bonaparte's great fleet! On July 1 it dropped anchor off Alexandria, and Bonaparte, as energetic in his own realm as Nelson himself in his, landed his entire army that day.

Nelson, meanwhile, fought his way up to Syracuse, his ardent impatient spirit fretting itself into more than fever by this strange pursuit of a fleet that seemed clothed in garments of invisibility. "My return to Syracuse in 1798," he told Troubridge, long afterwards, "broke my heart;" and that statement was scarcely an exaggeration. "On the 18th," he said, "I had near died with the swelling of some of the vessels of the heart." It seems probable that the long-continued strain of the fierce pursuit wrought some physical mischief in that organ, for always afterwards Nelson suffered acute pain from it when any deep emotion stirred him. He wrote to his wife from Syracuse, "I have not been able to find the French fleet, to my great mortification. . . . I yet live in hopes of meeting these fellows, but it would have been my delight to have tried Bonaparte on a wind; for he commands the fleet as well as the army." "We have gone a round," he said, "of 600 leagues, with an expedition incredible, and I am as yet as ignorant of the situation of the enemy as I was twenty-seven days ago." The sea has strange chances, but it is yet a puzzle how in so comparatively small a sea as the Mediterranean, and with

a mark so huge as Bonaparte's wide-scattered fleet, Nelson could have swept from Sardinia to Alexandria, and from Alexandria back to Syracuse, without sighting his foe.

On July 23 Nelson sailed again from Syracuse, swept with all canvas spread along the Morea, got tidings of the enemy on the 28th, and at a quarter to three on the afternoon of August 1, a quick-eyed middy, perched at the masthead of the *Zealous*, caught, across the low Egyptian shores, a glimpse of a far-stretching line of naked topmasts, like a fringe of lances against the sky. It was the French fleet, lying at anchor in Aboukir Bay. The dogged, untiring Englishman had at last overtaken his prey!

Aboukir Bay may be roughly described as resembling a fish-hook laid flat. The promontory of Aboukir at its western extremity corresponds to the barb of the hook, with what is now called Nelson's Island at the very tip of the barb. The shank of the hook stretches in a gentle curve for about eighteen miles to the Rosetta mouth of the Nile. Bonaparte had directed his admiral to adopt one of three courses with the fleet: he was to bring it within the old port of Alexandria, if there was depth of water sufficient; anchor it in Aboukir Bay, if it offered a good position for defence; or sail for Corfu. The water in the port of Alexandria was found to be too shallow, Corfu was distant, and Brueys believed he could successfully defend himself

in Aboukir Bay. He anchored his ships there in a line nearly two miles long, and reaching from what we have called the point of the hook—Nelson Island —to a shoal which ran parallel with the mainland. Brueys' line really formed a very obtuse angle, with the great flagship, *L'Orient*, as its apex. A battery on Aboukir Island guarded with its fire the narrow gap betwixt the ship at the head of the French line, the *Guerrier*, and the island itself. In case of attack Brueys had directed that each ship should be connected with the next ship in the line by a great iron cable. The fleet would thus become a chain of floating batteries, two miles long, slightly curved outwards, with one extremity touching Aboukir Island, and the other running into shoal water near the shore. It could, its admiral hoped, be neither turned nor pierced.

It was two o'clock on August 1 when the French look-outs perched on the foretopmast of the *Orient* saw the western sky-line sparkling with the gleams of white sails. This must be Nelson's fleet. The French ships had watering parties ashore; hasty orders were sent for their recall, and a hurried council of war was held in Brueys' cabin. Should the French weigh and meet their foes in the offing, or wait an attack in their present position? With some hesitation and flurry it was decided to wait an attack at anchor.

By this time the afternoon was nearly gone,

and the tall masts of the leading British ships could be seen from the deck of the French flagship across the flat Aboukir promontory. Their hulls were hidden, but their gliding topsails, bellying with the wind, grew clearer moment by moment. Brueys made up his mind that the English would not attack till morning. Night was coming on; the French ships were anchored in strange waters; the slower British ships were yet hanging faint on the distant horizon. What sane admiral would risk a night battle under such conditions?

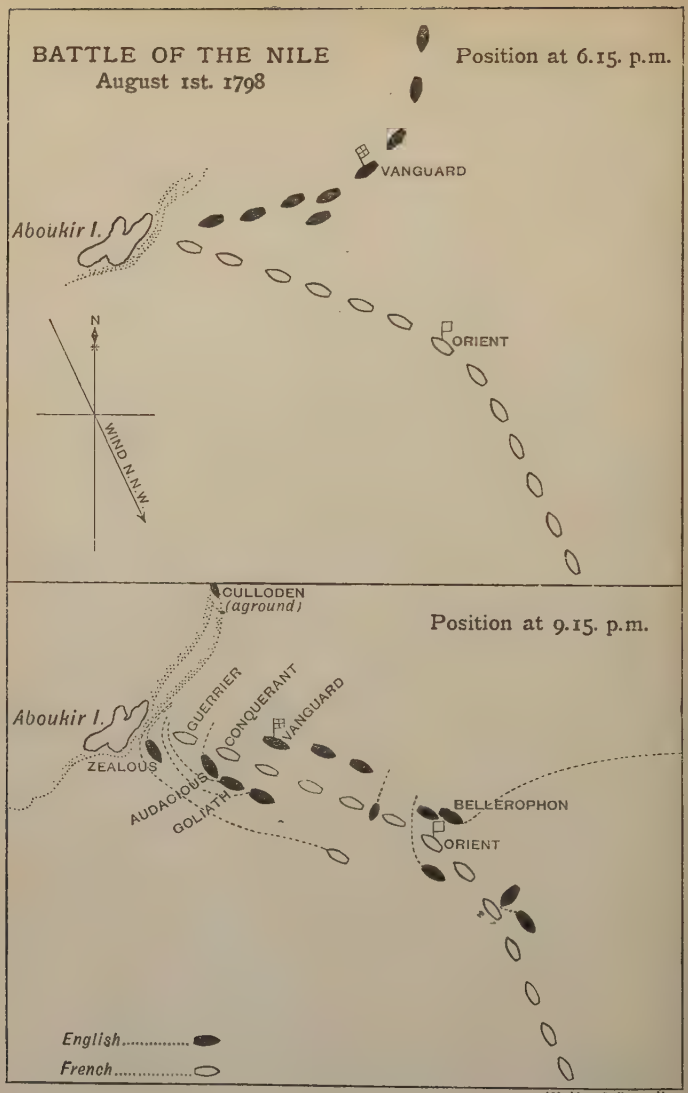
The element Brueys left out of his calculations was the audacious genius, the vehement fighting impulse, of Nelson. Nelson, too, had that rare gift, shared by only a few of the great commanders of all time, of kindling to his own ardent temper, and shaping to the mould of his own audacious genius, the human instruments by which he worked. His captains had caught a spark of Nelson's flame; the whole accumulated fury of that long eight weeks' chase, with its disappointments and exasperations, was burning through the British fleet. And with no pause nor doubt, and scarcely any gleam of signal, the quick-following British line-of-battle ships, as they rounded Aboukir Bay, flung themselves up into the wind, and bore up straight for the head of the French line. Nelson's tactics were perfectly understood, and scarcely needed the interpretation of fluttering signals.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIGHT AT THE NILE

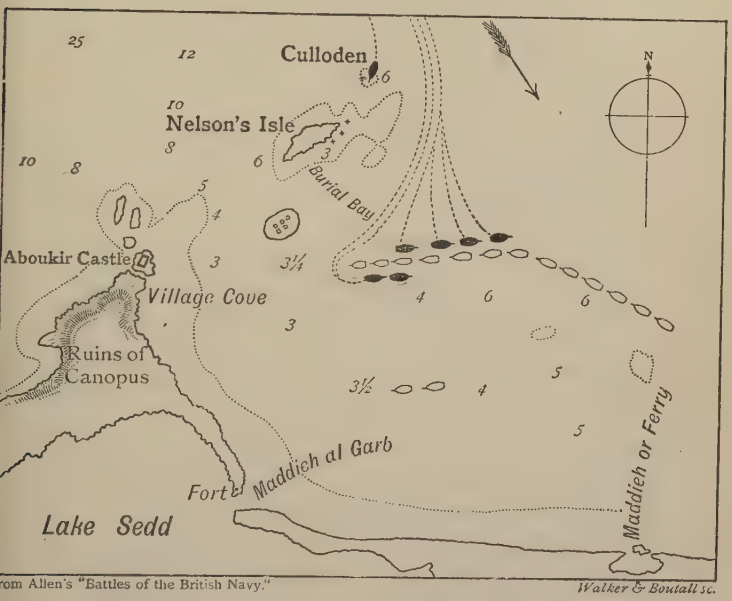
THE steady sweep of the English ships into the fight, swooping round the curve of Aboukir Island as with the flight of hawks curving through fields of air on to their prey, strangely flurried the French. They were caught, in a sense, unprepared. Their shore parties had not yet all returned; the council of war in Brueys' cabin had scarcely broken up. The leading British ships were the *Goliath*, commanded by Foley, and the *Zealous*, commanded by Hood; and an account from the pen of Sir George Elliot enables us to see the opening stages of the great fight through the eager eyes of a middy.

Elliot was signal-midshipman on board the *Goliath*, and he had all a middy's jealousy for the honour of his ship as against the *Zealous*, just then competing with it for the honour of leading the British line. Elliot was perched in the foretop of the *Goliath* when he caught sight through his glass of the top-masts of the French in Aboukir Bay. "The *Zealous* was so close to us," he writes, "that had I hailed the deck they"—his keen rivals on board the *Zealous*—



Walker & Boutall sc.

"must have heard me." And Elliot had no intention of allowing those scamps, the middies of the *Zealous*, to boast that their ship was the first to signal the enemy! "I therefore," young Elliot



rom Allen's "Battles of the British Navy." *Walker & Boutall sc.*

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE.

Doubling on the French Line.

records, "slid down by the backstay, and reported what I had seen." How eagerly the signal was made may be imagined, but in this instance virtue was not rewarded. "The undertoggle of the upper flag

at the main came off"—being, no doubt, run up too furiously—"the lower flag fell," and before the disaster could be remedied, the *Zealous* had hoisted the signal for the enemy in sight; but to his dying day Elliot cherished the darkest suspicions that those unprincipled fellows on board the *Zealous* had signalled purely on the strength of seeing the broken signal of the *Goliath!*

At this moment the *Goliath* was, as Elliot proudly records, "actually first by half the length of the ship," and everybody knew that the next signal would be to "form line of battle in order of sailing." The quickest ship, that is, would lead; and why should not this be the *Goliath*, even though the captain of the *Zealous* was much the senior? The honour of leading depended on quick wits and quick eyes, not on dates of commissions! Foley was as eager to beat the *Zealous* as the youngest middy in his ship. He had his staysails and studding-sails all ready to run up so as to make his dash for the land; and, says Elliot, "I fortunately saw the flags under the flagship's foresail as they left the deck." Those tiny black balls running up to the admiral's topmast could only be the signal to "form line of battle," the quickest ship to lead. No need to wait till the swiftly climbing black specks broke into a flutter of many-coloured bunting at the *Vanguard's* masthead. As a matter of fact, by the time Nelson's signal had reached the *Vanguard's* royal, Foley's

studding-sails were spreading themselves on either wing; the *Goliath* shot ahead, and followed, no doubt, by many sea-going expletives from the decks of the disgusted *Zealous*, the *Goliath* took the lead, to the exultation of all its middies.

This incident marks the eager, gallant spirit that prevailed on the British ships, and it had one happy incidental result. The ground was strange. Nelson had no chart of Aboukir Bay. He had already hailed Hood in the *Zealous* to ask if he thought they had water enough to clear the island and head the French line, and Hood had replied that he would lead, and take the soundings as he went. But, as it happened, Foley did possess a good French chart, and he was able to lead with perfect confidence and safety, and without the delay of taking soundings.

Foley led steadily for the head of the French line. Whether the idea of crossing the stem of the leading French ship, and so engaging the French on their unprepared side, was Foley's or Nelson's has been keenly debated. It seems clear that Nelson gave to Foley no express order by signal to lead round the bows of the *Guerrier*. But every captain in the fleet knew it was Nelson's plan, if he found the French at anchor, and therefore incapable of movement, to throw his whole weight on half the enemy's line and crush each single ship in turn by attacking it on both sides at once. Nelson fought with brains as well as

with broadsides. He out-manœuvred his enemy as well as out-fought him; and Foley was only carrying out Nelson's known plan when he turned the *Goliath* towards the narrow gap betwixt the bows of the *Guerrier* and the island.

"When we were nearly within gunshot, standing close to Captain Foley," says Elliot, "I heard him say to the master that he wished he could get inside the leading ship of the enemy's line. I immediately looked for the buoy on her anchor, and saw it apparently at the usual distance of a cable's length (200 yards), which I reported. They both looked at it and agreed there was room to pass between the ship and her anchor." "Where there was room for a French ship to swing there was room for an English ship to pass," was Nelson's motto, and Foley acted upon it. "The master then had orders to go forward and drop the anchor the moment it was a ship's breadth inside the French ship, so that we should not exactly swing on board of her. All this was exactly executed." Brueys, as a matter of fact, had made two mistakes. He had left a gap betwixt his van-ship and the island, so that his line could be turned; and he had failed to pass a chain, as he had intended, from ship to ship, so that, in addition, his line could be pierced.

Steadily the great English seventy-four kept on its course. The battery on the island spluttered angrily

SIR JAMES SAUMAREZ, Bart.

From a mezzotint after the portrait by Carbonnier

KENSINGTON

but ineffectively upon it. The shadow of the tall masts of the *Goliath* cast by the westering sun swept over the decks of the *Guerrier*, and just as the centre gun of the British ship's broadside covered the Frenchman's bowsprit, the whole length of the *Goliath* broke into the flame of an overwhelming broadside. "Not a shot," says the youthful and exultant Elliot, "could miss at that distance." Then Foley bore swiftly up, the chain of the falling anchor rattled hoarsely from the *Goliath's* stern—Nelson had ordered all his ships to anchor from the stern, so that, without "swinging," they might at once be in a fighting position—and the *Goliath* lay broadside to its enemy. The chain, however, by some accident, was not bitted, and the ship had too much "way" to be easily arrested; so the *Goliath* glided slowly on till abreast of the second ship of the French line.

Hood was following hard in Foley's track. He, too, smote the unhappy *Guerrier* with a raking broadside as he crossed its bows, and the deck of that ship was covered with the wreck of fallen spars, with dismounted guns, and dead or dying men. Then, swinging round with the nicest accuracy, the *Zealous* lay broadside to broadside with the *Guerrier*, already a half-wrecked ship, and scourged it with quick-following and deadly broadsides. As they crossed the *Guerrier's* bows, the keen-eyed Elliot saw that the Frenchmen were quite unprepared to fight

their port broadsides. Their lower deck guns were not run out, and the upper deck ports were crowded with lumber.

Elliot reports another significant incident. A French launch, laden with water barrels, was pulling frantically but slowly up against the wind. In it was the admiral commanding the van division, who had been assisting at the council of war on the flagship. He had not yet reached his own ship when, to his despair and wrath, he saw the British ships round the island and without a pause bear up and cross the head of the French line. Etiquette has some authority even in war, and the French ships in the van would not open fire till the admiral in command of the division gave the signal; and that unhappy officer, instead of being on the quarter-deck of his ship, was in a launch heavily laden with water-butts a hundred yards distant! "I saw him," says Elliot, "waving his hat and evidently calling to his ship when still at a considerable distance. An officer was leaning against his ensign-staff, listening. At last this officer ran forward to the poop and down to the lower deck. We knew what was coming, and off went their whole broadside; but just too late to hit us, and passed harmlessly between us and the *Zealous*."

The Frenchman thus fired into mere space, and both the *Goliath* and the *Zealous* reached their place inside the French line without receiving a shot. This was marvellous good fortune, but it was also

an advantage secured by the swift and unhesitating attack of the British. Had the leading British ships hesitated, or suspended their attack, say, till the slower ships of the fleet, still miles distant, had come up, this distracted French admiral would have been on board his own ship; and then, says Elliot, "we should have had broadsides from the van division, four or five ships, for nearly twenty minutes, and should have been, in all probability, so much disabled as to have rendered it almost impossible to reach and take up the exact position where we did them so much harm." The prompt unfaltering decision of the British onfall averted that disaster.

The *Orïon* by this time was following the *Zealous*. It too crossed the shot-wrecked bows of the *Guerrier*, brought that ill-fated ship's remaining mast down with a raking broadside, moved, stately and tall, outside both the *Zealous* and the *Goliath* to the third vessel in the French line. A French 36-gun frigate, the *Serieuse*, lay outside the track of the *Orion*, and ventured to fire upon it as that ship moved past. Line-of-battle ships in an engagement do not, without provocation, fire on frigates; but the Frenchman had tempted his fate, and the *Orion* smote the too daring *Serieuse* with a single broadside that destroyed her. She commenced to sink; her anchor was cut, and she drifted on to the shoal, where she went down with only her topmast showing above the water. And with that dread-

ful preamble, the *Orion*, taking up a position in which it commanded the bow of the *Franklin*, an 80-gun ship, and the quarter of the *Peuple Sovrain*, broke into fierce battle with them both.

Next came the *Theseus* under Miller, who smote the much-enduring *Guerrier* with the conventional broadside, and then performed a very fine feat of seamanship. A narrow water-lane, a pistol-shot wide, stretched betwixt the *Zealous* and the *Goliath* and the French ships with which they were fighting. Miller put his helm down, and, conning his ship with exquisite coolness, ran down this lane—betwixt the British ships and their antagonists, that is—discharging a broadside into each Frenchman as he passed it. The *Orion* was lying too close to its foes to permit the *Theseus* to run inside it, so Miller shot in a curve round the stern of the *Orion*, and then glided in on the French line to the quarter of his particular foe, the *Spartiate*. In a letter to his wife Miller explains that he noticed the French ships were firing so high that their shot passed above the decks of the *Theseus*. "Knowing well," he says, "that at such a moment the Frenchmen would not have coolness enough to change their elevation, I closed on them suddenly, running under the arch of their shot. . . . This was precisely at sunset, or forty-four minutes past six."

The *Audacious* next came up, but, scorning the formality of going round the disabled *Guerrier*, it

shot through the gap betwixt that vessel and the French ship astern of it, raking both with a broadside as it passed. This was, at least, a change for the ill-fated *Guerrier;* it was raked from the stern instead of the bows! Then the *Audacious* moved down the line till it reached the bow of the *Conquerante,* and closed in on that ship in the thunder of combat.

Nelson himself in the *Vanguard* now came into the fight, and he carried out the second stroke in the tactics which was the complement of Foley's manœuvre in leading round the French line, and determined the issue of the battle. He did not pierce the French line, but dropped his anchor at pistol-shot distance outside the third ship in the enemy's van, the *Spartiate,* which was already fighting the *Theseus* on the other side. That bewildered French ship had thus two British seventy-fours smiting her with furious broadsides on either flank. The slaughter, the wreckage, the despair on board the *Spartiate* may be better guessed than described, and its flag came quickly fluttering down. The *Minotaur* and *Defence,* following Nelson's lead, placed themselves outside the *Aquilon* and the *Peuple Sovrain,* already suffering from the overpowering fire of the *Orion* and the *Audacious* from the other side. Nelson, in a word, was throwing an overwhelming force on each ship of the French van in turn, and crushing it like a nut in a pair of nut-crackers,

while the French rear looked on in mere distracted helplessness.

Next through the dusk, made yet more obscure by continents of drifting smoke, came the tall masts of the *Bellerophon*, followed by the *Majestic*. The *Bellerophon* in the darkness missed the *Franklin*, the ship next to that on which Nelson was firing, and fell foul of *L'Orient*, Brueys' flagship, a monster of 120 guns, nearly double the *Bellerophon* in size and fighting power, and which, as it happened, had no antagonist on its inner side, and could therefore pour the whole wrath of its fire on its audacious but very unequal antagonist. The *Majestic*, in like fashion, groping her way through the murky air, ran almost bows on upon the *Heureux*, Brueys' second in support, and was fiercely raked by the Frenchman, and her captain, Westcott, a seaman of a very gallant type, killed. Then swinging clear of her big antagonist, and drifting half-wrecked farther down the line, the *Majestic* dropped her anchor off the bows of the next French ship astern, the *Mercure*, and fought her with dogged courage. The *Majestic*, indeed, suffered most of all the British ships, losing 193 of her crew.

The scene at this stage was both picturesque and terrible. It was night, a night made blacker by the drifting masses of smoke that hung over sea and shore. Nelson had directed that every British ship should hoist four lights horizontally at her mizzen-

peak, and through the darkness and the smoke those level clusters of lights high in air marked the positions of the British ships. Below were the ceaseless pulses of red and darting flame, while far across the sea and over the low-lying shores rolled the ever-deepening thunder of the great battle. Troubridge, in the *Culloden*, was seven miles off when the leading British ships were swinging round the island and plunging into the fight, and with what eagerness he pressed on to take his part in the fray can be imagined. Troubridge was perhaps, of all Nelson's captains, the one most akin to Nelson himself in fighting quality. "How can they say I have lost a right arm," said Nelson once, "when I have two right arms in Troubridge and Ball!" The *Culloden*, too, though the slowest was perhaps the best fighting ship of the fleet, and must, had it reached the battle-line, have played a great part in the engagement.

But in his eagerness Troubridge rounded the island too closely, and the *Culloden* ran hopelessly ashore. There, in plain sight, the battle was raging, and the men and officers on the *Culloden* could do nothing save watch the flashes of the broadsides and count the Frenchmen as one by one they struck. The *Culloden*, it may be added, was half wrecked by the disaster. Her rudder was torn off; when she floated again she had made seven feet of water, and to prevent her sinking a sail was thrummed

and passed under the ship's bottom. One wild story runs that Troubridge, in his exasperation, attempted suicide by leaping overboard. That tale is probably a myth, but any reader of decorous tastes must reflect with concern on the amount of profane language expended that night between the decks of the *Culloden!*

Meanwhile the *Bellerophon* had fared badly under the tremendous broadsides of *L'Orient.* Two of her masts went by the board; she thrice took fire; fifteen of her guns were dismounted, and nearly every third man in her crew was struck down. A little before nine o'clock she cut her anchor and drifted out of the fight. The *Swiftsure* and the *Alexander* were by this time approaching the scene of action, with men at quarters, and the *Swiftsure,* steering for the centre of the enemy's line, saw through the darkness a mastless hull lying in its track. Taking it to be an enemy, Hallowell, the captain of the *Swiftsure,* was about to fire upon it, but, to make sure, he hailed the silent, lightless mass. A voice called back in answer, through the darkness, "*Bellerophon,* going out of action disabled." Hallowell instantly bore up and moved steadily down to the French flagship. The crew of that vessel were at that moment in a state of very French exultation. They had driven off in a condition of a mere wreck the British ship that had dared to engage *L'Orient* in combat! But, while they cheered, the tall sails

SIR THOMAS TROUBRIDGE, BART.

From an engraving after the portrait by SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY, R.A.

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of the *Swiftsure*, emerging from the smoke, loomed high in the dancing light of the gun-flashes, and that ship, dropping its anchor so as to occupy almost exactly the ill-fated *Bellerophon's* place, opened fire with fierce and disconcerting energy. The *Alexandria* kept steadily on its course through the darkness, and, conned by its captain, Ball, shot through the French line astern of *L'Orient*, and swung-to close on its inner quarter. The *Leander*, too, a 50-gun ship, had by this time abandoned the task of assisting the *Culloden* to get afloat, and came into the fight, taking up a position, with fine seamanship, off the bows of *L'Orient*, so that ship now found itself scourged by a fire from three quarters at once.

The *Guerrier* by this time had struck. Hood in the *Zealous* was pouring on her an overmastering fire. Her masts had gone by the board, the whole of her head was shot away, her maindeck ports, from the bowsprit to the gangway, were smashed, her deck was a tangle of fallen rigging and spars and overturned guns. Hood at last grew tired of smiting an enemy in such a pitiful condition; he hailed the *Guerrier* to know if it had surrendered. There was no answering voice, but a faint splutter of musketry, and the sullen and intermittent firing of a casual gun from the maindeck showed that the much-battered *Guerrier* was still unsubdued. Hood fired on her once more, then paused. "At last," he says, "being tired of killing men that way, I

sent on board a lieutenant, who was allowed, as I instructed, to hoist a light and haul it down in sign of submission."

The *Conquerante*, the second ship, had long since yielded to the fire of the *Goliath* and the *Audacious*. She was, indeed, the first French ship to strike. The *Spartiate* fought gallantly, and was greatly aided by the ship astern of her, the *Aquilon*, whose captain, with great skill and coolness, by carrying out an anchor a little distance, had hauled his ship athwart the line, so as to rake the *Vanguard*. Before the *Spartiate* struck Nelson himself had been severely wounded. A langrage shot grazed his forehead, and a flap of skin and flesh fell over his single remaining eye, while the blood ran thickly down his features. He was blinded and dazed. "I am killed," he exclaimed to Captain Berry; "remember me to my wife." He was carried to the cockpit, but refused to allow the doctors to attend to him till his proper turn came. He would not have his pain assuaged at the cost of one of his sailors. When his wound was bound up, Nelson, incapable of inaction even when he thought himself dying, sent for his secretary and commenced to dictate a despatch. The secretary was excited and agitated, and Nelson, snatching the pen from his hand, commenced, half-blinded as he was, to scratch with his left hand, in straggling characters, the sentences which re-

corded his thanks to Almighty God for the victory He had granted to the British fleet.

Meanwhile the next ship in the French line had cut its cable and drifted, mastless and disabled, out of the fight. Things were going badly, too, with *L'Orient*. Brueys had already fallen. He was twice wounded—on the head and the hand—and at last was nearly cut in two by a round shot. He refused to be carried below. It became a French admiral, he said, to die on his quarter-deck; and, with the fight raging all round him, he expired. He was a brave seaman if not a great admiral. A little after nine o'clock a fire broke out in the cabin of *L'Orient*, and was with difficulty extinguished. Shortly after flames were visible on the poop of the great ship. Ball told Coleridge that fireballs had been prepared on the *Alexander*, and that a lieutenant of the *Alexander* threw one of these on to the quarter-deck of *L'Orient*, and so set fire to her. But Coleridge's opium-inspired memory was not always accurate, and there is good reason to doubt this story. It is certain that the French had prepared fireballs with something of the quality of the ancient "Greek fire" for use against the British, and it was supposed throughout the British fleet that some of these ignited on board *L'Orient* and caused that ship's destruction. The French explanation is that the painters had been at work on the flagship and had left oil cans standing about, and these occasioned the fire.

When the flames first appeared, the British ships at that moment engaged with *L'Orient* promptly concentrated their shot on the burning quarter-deck, so as to prevent the fire being extinguished. The flames ran quickly across the deck of the ill-fated ship. They leaped up the rigging, they spread from sail to sail. The news that the French flagship was on fire brought Nelson up from the cockpit of the *Vanguard*, and he despatched its one surviving boat to assist in the rescue of the crew of the burning ship. The British ships fighting with *L'Orient* kept up their fire with tireless energy, though they knew they themselves ran the risk of being destroyed by the fast-coming explosion. Soon *L'Orient* was one mass of leaping and crackling flame, and at about ten o'clock, with a blast of sound that for a moment overpowered and silenced all the tumult of the battle, the great ship blew up. The air was filled with the fragments of spars, masses of burning canvas, weapons, dead bodies, &c. The deck of the *Franklin*, the nearest French ship, according to the account given by the adjutant of Rear-Admiral Blanquet, was "covered with burning pieces of timber and rope."

The moon had, a little earlier, risen over the land, the clear, full, Egyptian moon; its white light falling softly on the eddying smoke of the battle, and making yet more lurid the red flashes of the incessant broadsides below. But the burst of flame

from the exploding *Orient* filled for a moment the moonlit skies, as well as sea and land, with its scarlet light. Then came blackness and silence. So dreadful was the blast of sound that all other noises were hushed by it. For nearly a quarter of an hour, according to the French account, silence lay on the two fleets. Not a shot was fired on either side. Out of a crew of nearly 1000 men belonging to *L'Orient* only seventy were saved. Then sullenly, and as if with reluctance, the guns began to speak afresh, and the battle reawoke.

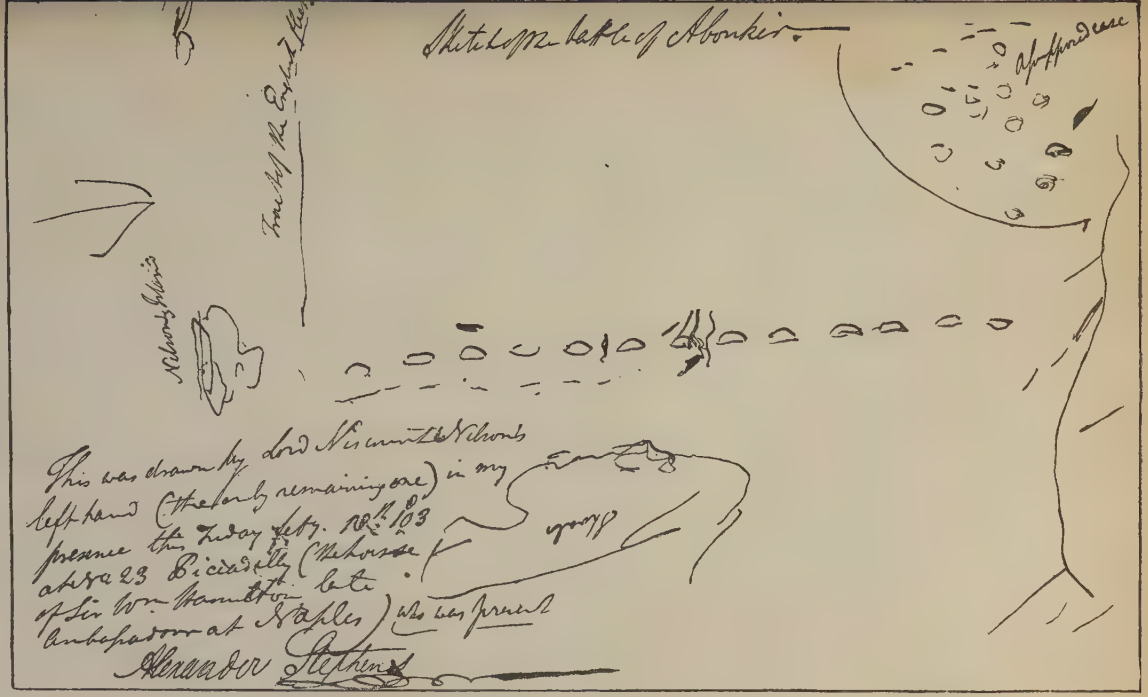
The *Franklin* struck its flag shortly before midnight, making the sixth ship that had surrendered. The *Franklin* was partially dismasted, every second gun was dismounted and every second man in her crew was killed or wounded; yet in a general order Bonaparte announced that "the *Franklin* struck her flag without being dismasted or having sustained any damage!" The *Tonnant*, the *Heureux*, and the *Mercure* had slipped their cables and drifted out of the line. The battle was dying out; and the truth was that the British were almost more exhausted than the French. Nelson, lying with bandaged head but restless brain in his cot, ordered this ship or that to move towards the French ships not yet engaged; but, says Miller of the *Theseus*, "my people were so extremely jaded that as soon as they had hove our sheet-anchor up they dropped under the capstan bars and were asleep in a moment in every sort of

posture, having been working at their fullest exertion, or fighting, for nearly twelve hours."

Ball, of the *Alexander*, told Coleridge that after midnight, when the ship had, after a struggle of some hours, silenced the *Franklin*, his first lieutenant came to him and said the men were so utterly exhausted they "were scarcely capable of lifting an arm," and, as the enemy's fire had ceased, he begged that the men might be allowed to lie down by their guns for a few minutes. Ball consented: with the exception of himself, his officers, and a small watch, the entire crew threw themselves down by their guns, and, with the smoke and blood of battle upon them, slept for twenty minutes. Then the call ran round the ship, the men started up refreshed, the guns thundered with new energy, and the enemy at once struck.

When morning dawned, Aboukir Bay offered a strange spectacle. Brueys' ordered and stately line of great battle-ships had disappeared. Six French ships had struck. The magnificent *Orient* itself had vanished. Two line-of-battle ships were ashore; a third, the *Tonnant*, floated mastless and helpless. There remained three ships; of these one, the *Timoleon*, ran ashore and became a wreck; the other two, under Admiral Villeneuve, made their escape. Villeneuve was to meet Nelson again at Trafalgar.

This, surely, was a final and crushing victory; and yet Nelson was not satisfied! "If it had pleased



THE BATTLE OF ABOUKIR (OR THE NILE).

Facsimile of the Sketch-plan drawn by Nelson, now in the British Museum.

God," he told Lord Minto, "that I had not been wounded, not a boat would have escaped to tell the tale." Yet the victory might have satisfied the ambition of a Cæsar or an Alexander. It annihilated the naval strength of France. It gave Great Britain absolute command of the Mediterranean. It made Egypt for Bonaparte not a field of conquest, but a prison. "On the morning of July 31, 1798," says M. Denon, "the French were masters of Egypt, Corfu, and Malta; thirty vessels of the line united these possessions with France, and rendered the whole one empire." Only forty-eight hours afterwards and this fancied "empire" had vanished like an exhalation, and Bonaparte and his veterans were prisoners in the very land where they were dreaming of conquest. "It was this battle," says M. De la Greviere, "which for two years delivered up the Mediterranean to the power of England; summoned thither the Russian squadrons; left the French army isolated amidst a hostile population; decided the Porte in declaring against them; saved India from French enterprise, and brought France within a hair's-breadth of her ruin by reviving the smouldering flames of war with Austria, and bringing Suwarrow and the Austro-Russians to the French frontiers."

Perhaps the most striking feature of the great fight was the helpless fashion in which the ships of the French rear looked on while their van and centre were crushed. The rear division was under

NELSON

From the portrait by Sir William Beechey, R.A.

KENSINGTON

the command of Villeneuve, who certainly did not lack courage; and Brueys had placed in it some of his best ships, as he expected that Nelson would attack there. Villeneuve afterwards offered three explanations of the strictly passive part he took in the battle: (1) "he could not spare any of his anchors;" (2) he had "no instructions;" (3) "on board the ships in the rear the idea of weighing and going to the help of the ships engaged occurred to no one." The three reasons when put together have, of course, not the weight of a grain of sand. The wind, it is true, blew straight down the French line, but at seven o'clock Villeneuve could at least have slipped his anchor, and with the six ships of the French rear division have stretched out of the bay, destroyed the *Culloden* as it lay helpless, and intercepted the *Swiftsure* and *Alexander* as they ran down to the fight.

But an admiral who could weigh the risk of losing his anchors against the shame of leaving his comrades to be destroyed unhelped was clearly not of the stuff out of which great leaders are made. Imagine Nelson lying at anchor and unattacked while, say, Hood and Foley and Saumarez were fighting against desperate odds within a thousand yards of him! The guns of the *Vanguard*, in such an event, would have gone off on their own account!

At two o'clock on the day following the fight,

Nelson, by a general order, called upon his fleet to join in an act of thanksgiving to God for the great victory He had granted to the British flag. It was a strange scene. The decks of the ships were still bloody with slaughter, and the shot-torn sails and splintered masts told how fierce had been the fight. Yet on every ship of the fleet the crews all gathered, and with bared heads joined in devout thanksgiving to God. Men who fear God fear nothing else. It is said that scene strangely impressed the French prisoners of war who watched it. These British sailors, so terrible in fight, could pray like children when the fight was over!

The French in this battle were much superior in all the elements of strength to the British. Nelson's best ship, the *Culloden*, never came into the fight; and with twelve seventy-fours and a fifty-gun ship he had to attack a fleet consisting of one ship of 120 guns, three of eighty guns, nine seventy-fours, with four frigates, bomb-vessels, gunboats, &c. The French fleet was manned by 11,200 sailors; the English carried only 7401. It must be remembered, too, that a French ship of a given class was always of greater tonnage and weight of broadside than a British ship of the same nominal class. Thus a British ship of ninety-eight guns fired a broadside of 1102 lbs.; a French eighty-gun ship fired one of 1287 lbs.! The *Franklin*, taken at the Nile, was reckoned to be in strength and fighting

power "the finest two-decked ship in the world." She was transferred to the British navy under the name of the *Canopus*, a name that still survives in the British navy lists. The British lost in the battle, in killed and wounded, 896; the French, a number estimated variously from 2000 to 5000.

It is a curious fact that, as Napoleon told Sir George Cockburn on board the *Northumberland*, Brueys, on the voyage to Egypt, "had actually explained to him (Napoleon) very minutely the great disadvantage a fleet must labour under by receiving, when at anchor, an attack from a hostile fleet under sail; yet, from want of recollection and presence of mind, he had himself met Nelson's attack in this way, losing his own life and nearly his whole fleet to exemplify the correctness of his ideas and the impropriety of his conduct!"

There is no need to tell here how the news swept round the world, or what a tumult of rejoicing it kindled in Great Britain. The news reached Bonaparte on a desert march. He read the despatch with an unmoved countenance, then turned to the officers around him and said, "We have no longer a fleet! Ah, well! we must either remain in this country or quit it as great as the ancients!"

CHAPTER V

BONAPARTE IN EGYPT

AT St. Helena Napoleon said that the moment he heard the news of Nelson's victory in Aboukir Bay he knew that the fate of the French army in Egypt was sealed. The sullen echoes of Nelson's guns were the knell of his dreams of an Eastern empire.

These iris-tinted visions seem scarcely intelligible now to sober reason. Bonaparte, as he stood on the beach at Alexandria, saw before him, in a sort of magical perspective, a succession of conquests vaster than Alexander ever imagined. He would march on India through Persia. He actually wrote to Tippoo Sahib that he was "coming to deliver him from the iron yoke of the English!" Or he would rally the Druses and the Greeks to his standard, and march to Paris through Constantinople and Vienna, and thus burst on astonished Europe with the glories of conquests such as history had never yet recorded playing round his brow. But all these dreams vanished in the thunder and smoke of the

Nile. The perfidious English once more commanded the whole Mediterranean. Egypt had become for the French a prison; Bonaparte's troops were an army of castaways! It was only a question of time when an expedition cut off from supplies and reinforcements, and even from news, must surrender.

Whether Bonaparte, indeed, realised with an intuition so sure all the results of the Nile may be doubted, but at least he concealed his fears with perfect success. "These English," he said, "will compel us to do greater things than we meant." He ingeniously emptied on the memory of the fallen Brueys all the responsibility for the defeat of Aboukir Bay, and set himself resolutely to effect the complete mastery of Egypt. It was the amazing characteristic of Bonaparte's genius that while, on one side, it was capable of dreams which suggest the wildness of Arabian fable, on the other side it was marked by the hard-headed common sense, the grasp of practical details, the cool vision of realities such as we associate with the intellect of a Lowland Scot or of a Dutch burgomaster; and Bonaparte employed all these qualities to mould Egypt to his will.

Egypt was nominally a province of Turkey, the Sultan being represented by a pacha at Cairo; but the real power was exercised by the Mamelukes under Mourad Bey. With characteristic subtlety and audacity Bonaparte had announced that he

came "to maintain the Sultan's authority and deliver Egypt from the tyranny of the Mamelukes!" Twice on the march from Alexandria to Cairo Mourad Bey's brilliant horsemen flung themselves in apparently overwhelming numbers on the steady French squares. But the fiery daring of the East was vain against the discipline and arms of the West. The second of these combats was within sight of the Pyramids, from whose summits Bonaparte told his troops "forty centuries look down upon you." And those astonished forty centuries, it may be added, never looked on a stranger spectacle than these soldiers of Revolutionary and sceptical France, with their disciplined volleys, driving the mail-clad Mamelukes before them into the Nile. In this combat more than 2000 Mamelukes were shot or drowned; of the French, not quite thirty were killed. And Bonaparte's troops spent nearly three days fishing drowned Mamelukes out of the Nile for the sake of the booty found on them.

"In five days," wrote Bonaparte, "we have made ourselves masters of Egypt." That was a somewhat imaginative statement, but there was no force in the Delta to withstand Bonaparte. Mourad Bey's horsemen were slain, or scattered like wind-blown sand, before the French advance. Bonaparte tried to enlist Mohammedan fanaticism on his side. Those who had destroyed Christianity in Europe, he announced, were come to perform the same benign feat in Egypt.

He headed all his proclamations with the Mohammedan profession of faith. "We also," his proclamation ran, "are true Mussulmans. Is it not we who destroyed the Pope?" Henri IV. said that "Paris was worth a mass," and Bonaparte, for whom religion was the idlest of follies, said afterwards at St. Helena that the empire of the East was worth "a turban and a pair of trousers," or the recital of a few pious syllables in Arabic. To Sir George Cockburn on board the *Northumberland*, while on his way to St. Helena, Napoleon frankly admitted that he became a Mohammedan while in Egypt. A mosque, he argued, was quite as respectable as a cathedral!

General Menou and a number of French officers embraced the new faith with even less reserve than their leader, who was cheerfully willing to march under the Crescent rather than under the Cross, if that performance promised better results. It is characteristic of Bonaparte's way of looking at religion, as a useful tool to be employed for any political or military end, that he was vexed because his soldiers would not adopt the turban *en masse* to suit his ends. "He regretted," he even said, "that he could not, like Alexander the Great, proclaim himself the son of Jupiter Ammon." Such a fiction would have been more useful to him in the subjugation of Egypt, he added, than a score of victories. The world's sense of humour, alas! was fatal to any such ingenious and

useful delusion, and Bonaparte, on the whole, resented the fact!

Madame de Remusat gives Bonaparte's own account of what he did and felt in the East. "In Egypt," he said, "I found myself free from the weariness and restraints of civilisation. I created a religion; I pictured myself on the road to Asia mounted on an elephant, with a turban on my head, and in my hand a new Koran, which I should compose according to my own ideas."

Bonaparte employed the Parisian savants he had brought with him in studying the resources of Egypt. He organised with magnificent energy and skill an administrative system for the whole country. He quenched in blood with fierce severity a revolt that broke out at Cairo, and then marched to meet his foes in Syria. A great Turkish army was gathering there; a powerful expedition was also being organised at Rhodes, and the French would thus be assailed from two points at once. Bonaparte's plan was to crush the nearer of his enemies before the more distant expedition could reach Egypt. With his sure soldierly vision he foresaw that the only Syrian town whose capture would give him trouble was Acre. It was a seaport, the headquarters of Djezzar Pacha; it could be reinforced from the sea by a British squadron. But it contained much wealth, and arms for 300,000 men, and Bonaparte organised a strong train of siege artillery for ser-

vice against it. By a curious blunder, however, he despatched his guns by sea to the scene of action, and the British had complete command of the sea. Sir Sidney Smith promptly snapped up the French transports, and when Bonaparte reached Acre he found his own guns grinning defiance at him from the walls of the town!

Bonaparte set out on his march for Syria early in February 1799, with a force of 12,000 men, under such leaders as Murat, Lannes, Kleber, and Reyner. He captured El Arish on February 20, and Jaffa on March 5. Here occurred the famous—or rather infamous—massacre of prisoners. A body of some 3000 to 4000 men had surrendered, and been granted quarter on the fall of Jaffa. Two days after their surrender they were marched to the sea-shore, broken up into irregular clusters on the sand, and shot or bayoneted. Napoleon long afterwards excused the bloody and shameful deed by saying that (1) he could not keep these prisoners for lack of food; (2) he could not release them, as that would strengthen the enemy's force; and (3) the troops captured in Jaffa were those who had surrendered and been released at El Arish. "It was true," he told Lord Ebrington at Elba, "I did order nearly 2000 Turks to be shot. . . . I could not take them with me, for I was short of bread, and they were too dangerous to be set at liberty a second time." But each of these excuses is a plain falsehood. As a

matter of fact, Bonaparte had ample stores; the dismissal of these prisoners would have added nothing to the difficulties of the French; and the prisoners taken at Jaffa had never been in El Arish. But Bonaparte's morality varied with his geography. He was now an Oriental dealing with Orientals. Christian ethics belonged to another latitude. He wished to strike terror into the East by one dreadful and far-seen example of severity. "The bones of the vast multitude," wrote Alison in 1820, "still remain in great heaps amidst the sand-hills of the desert; the Arab turns from the field of blood, and it remains in solitary horror, a melancholy monument of Christian atrocity."

On March 18 Bonaparte found himself before Acre, a little cluster of crowded houses on the edge of the Mediterranean, and which Bonaparte himself afterwards bitterly described as "the grain of sand that had undone all his projects." Turks are often formidable when fighting behind entrenchments, and Djezzar—"the butcher," to give the true significance of his name—was exactly the soldier to cling to the blood-splashed and shot-torn streets of Acre while a cartridge was left in his soldiers' belts. But French science and British leadership combined to make Acre impregnable, even to assaults which were launched by a Bonaparte, and led by such fiery spirits as Lannes and Kleber. Philippeaux, who organised the defence, was a French engineer of

distinguished ability, who, curiously enough, had been the schoolfellow of Bonaparte at Brienne, and had belonged to the same corps with him. When the Revolution broke out, Philippeaux left France, and, like many another emigrant, turned his sword against the Revolutionary Government. He was on board Sir Sidney Smith's squadron off Acre, and was placed in charge of the fortifications of the city. His skill as an engineer was of the highest order, and in the siege which followed, if Sir Sidney Smith was the sword, or the animating soul, of the defence, Philippeaux was its scientific brain.

In the judgment of many of his contemporaries, a vein of the charlatan ran through Sidney Smith's character. He was, says Marmont, a combination of a knight-errant and a charlatan; and certainly it is difficult to translate "the hero of Acre" into sober and intelligible prose. He was of great physical beauty, and had a vivid and magnetic personality which made women fall in love with him at sight, and men willing to die for him or with him. He was vain, no doubt, and his vanity was not in the least of the shy and inarticulate English type. It was even too articulate, and shocked men of sober taste. Like Dundonald, with whom he had many points in common, Sidney Smith was impatient of humdrum routine, and led his official superiors a very agitated existence. But he was a true leader of men, to whom danger was

a luxury and battle an exhilaration, and who combined in a very unusual degree the practical resourcefulness of a sailor with the fierce energy of a great partisan leader. Long afterwards, Napoleon at St. Helena said of Sidney Smith, "That man made me miss my destiny;" and certainly the defence of Acre against Bonaparte and his veterans is an exploit of which any soldier known to history might have been proud.

Sidney Smith escaped from Paris, April 25; Bonaparte left Paris, May 2; Nelson sailed from Cadiz also on May 2; "a very singular triple coincidence," says Mahan. Smith was blockading Alexandria with a small squadron when news reached him that the French had stormed Jaffa. He at once sent the *Theseus* to Acre with Philippeaux to push forward the defences of that place. Philippeaux had helped him to escape from the Temple, and was now to share with him the glory of the defence of Acre.

Acre resembles a blunted spear-head thrust out from the Syrian coast, just where the coast itself, curving sharply round to the eastward, forms a stumpy and rectangular promontory. Bonaparte must attack, so to speak, the neck of the spear-head, a narrow front covered by a ditch, a weak wall, and some towers. The position could not have been held for a day against siege artillery; but just then Bonaparte had no siege guns, and Sidney Smith

in his flagship the *Tigre*, with the *Theseus* under Captain Miller, and two gunboats, was able to cover ditch and wall, from both sides, with the fire of his guns, as well as sweep all the sea-roads that ran into Acre.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEFENCE OF ACRE

BONAPARTE saw before him only a low wall, covering a third-rate town, and held by a handful of Turks and British sailors. Behind it, he believed, stood the empire of the East. "When I have captured it," he said to Bourrienne, "I shall march on Damascus and Aleppo. I shall arm the tribes. I shall reach Constantinople. I shall overturn the Turkish Empire." "In that miserable fort," as he said long afterwards, "lay the fate of the East;" and with impatient energy Bonaparte launched his grenadiers against the unbreached wall.

They were repulsed with great slaughter. The walls were then partially breached with field-artillery and shaken with the explosion of a mine, and once more the French soldiers, gallantly led, came forward at a run to attack. Once more they were driven back. Some siege guns were now brought up, with great toil, from Jaffa, and a breach fifty feet wide was quickly made in the wall, and again the French were launched in assault on the town.

But Sidney Smith brought the practical genius

THE DEFENCE OF ACRE

March 19th. to May 20th. 1799.

From a Plan in the British Museum.

Walker & Boutall sc.

and manifold arts of a sailor to bear on the defence of the town. He perched guns in all sorts of unexpected positions, an 18-pounder in one of the ravelins, a 24-pounder in the lighthouse, a couple of 68-pounders, under the command of the carpenter of the *Tigre*,—so as to sweep the breach itself with their fire. His ships raked the French batteries, and smote the French stormers as they ran forward with a deadly flank-fire. Sidney Smith's sailors, it may be added, found infinite relish in the thought that they were exchanging broadsides with "Boney" himself, and they worked their guns with an energy worthy of the Nile or of Trafalgar. They enjoyed, too, with a sailor's glee, the tumult of the conflict at the breach, patting the Turks on the back with friendly energy, and leading them out in one daring sally after another upon the French.

Such was the delight of the sailors in the service, that, as Sidney Smith wrote to the Admiralty, "After being constantly occupied in such services for five days and nights they begged that they might not be relieved." Sidney Smith himself shared the semi-boyish joy of his sailors in this business of harrying the French. He wrote to his mother on March 7, "I am here amusing myself very well in my favourite way, harassing the heroes of the great nation, and making them feel that the very best thing that can happen them is to become my prisoners, for by this means they will get their bellies full and go home to

their families." The temper with which the sailors carried on the business of fighting the French is illustrated by an incident recorded by Keith, Sidney Smith's secretary. "I am just come in from a night's cruise in the barge," he writes on May 13; "the French fired musketry at me, to which I gave no other answer than roaring out to them that 'we were so tired of killing them, and seeing them killed, that we now wanted them to surrender and give us an opportunity of saving them!'"

Both Turks and French realised that the British sailors were the strength of the defence, but they naturally marked their sense of this fact in different ways; the French by posting 150 sharpshooters in their advanced trenches with special orders to pick off the English. To prevent his men being recognised, and save them from such unpleasant attention, Sidney Smith ordered that when in the advanced works they should not wear hats, and so specially tempt the bullets of the French sharpshooters. Djezzar Pacha, on the other hand, assured Sidney Smith that he could not persuade his troops to keep their places at the breach for ten minutes but for the presence of the British sailors. On one occasion, when Sidney Smith himself and some of his officers were exposing themselves needlessly, Djezzar Pacha came behind them and plucked them roughly down with his own hands, declaring that if they fell Acre was lost.

The sailors, it may be added, supplied with a touch of characteristic recklessness the one great disaster on the British side. Miller, of the *Theseus*, enjoyed, with a sailor's relish, the humour of collecting, new-priming, and firing back at the French, such of their own shells as fell on the British defences without bursting. He collected seventy of such shells, piled them in his own fore-cabin, and the carpenter of the *Theseus* was instructed to unload the French shells and recharge them with honest British gunpowder. The method employed was somewhat crude, the fuses being extracted with an auger. A middy armed with a mallet and a spike-nail added his services. Under this treatment a fuse was ignited, the seventy shells exploded simultaneously, and the entire fore-cabin of the *Theseus*, with all its contents—including the carpenter and the too zealous middy with his mallet and spike-nail — vanished. Captain Miller himself and forty seamen were killed, forty-seven others, including the two lieutenants of the ship, were seriously wounded, and the *Theseus* itself was reduced to the condition of a half-charred wreck. This was a somewhat ignoble ending for one of Nelson's Nile captains!

General Montholon, the French historian of the siege, divides it into three periods. The first extends from March 20, when the trenches were opened, to April 1. The French, he says, were so short of war-like material that they had to gather up the cannon

balls fired at them by the English ships in order to arm their own pieces; yet they confidently reckoned on carrying the place in three days. It was not so strong as Jaffa. It was held by a garrison of less than 3000 men, while Jaffa had 8000. They had taken Jaffa in three days—why should they not repeat the feat at Acre? They did not realise how materially Sidney Smith and his sailors were to disturb these sanguine calculations. The French, Kleber complained, "attacked like Turks, and the Turks defended themselves like Christians." There was more method, that is, in the defence than in the attack.

During Montholon's second period, from April 1 to the 27th, the French realised the seriousness of their task, and the fighting grew close, fierce, and bloody in a degree rarely exceeded. A mine was driven under one of the towers in the wall, and its external face blown completely down. The French gained possession of the lower storeys; a party of Turks and British sailors held its upper floors, and for a night and two days the building was shaken with the tumult of unceasing battle, till at last the French were driven out. On May 1, Sidney Smith writes to the Secretary of the Admiralty to say that "since April 7 we have been every hour employed in resisting the vigorous attacks of a most desperate enemy" It may be added when not employed in resisting attacks Sidney Smith was busy

making them. The great feature of the siege, indeed, was the number and fierceness of the sorties made upon the French. They almost equalled in number, and they not seldom surpassed in fire and vehemence, the French assaults themselves.

On May 2 Philippeaux died, killed by the mere strain and toil of the siege. The British by this time had run out a ravelin on each side of the enemy's nearest approach, and only ten yards from it, and manned them with marines from the *Tigre* and *Theseus*. The French vainly endeavoured to carry these ravelins, and the murderous flank-fire with which they smote both the works and the assaulting parties of the French may be imagined. When the French made a lodgment at the foot of the breach, they attempted to cover themselves from the fire on their flanks by traverses composed of sand-bags and the bodies of their own dead built in with them! On May 3 Sidney Smith writes, "We have been in one continued battle ever since the beginning of the siege;" and he adds, "We have the satisfaction of finding ourselves on the forty-sixth day in a better state of defence than we were the first day."

Montholon's third period extends from April 27 to the end of the siege. In the single week betwixt May 2 and May 9 there were seven night-attacks on the British ravelins and nine assaults on the town—all of them defeated. As night fell on May 7 —the fifty-first day of the siege—the sky-line to the

south-west was mottled with the topsails of an approaching fleet, and that night there was anxious debate, both in the French camp and behind the walls of Acre, as to whether the approaching ships flew the Tricolour or the Crescent. In the morning the sea front was crowded with ships; it was the Turkish squadron from Rhodes with an army of 7000 men. But the wind had died away; the ships lay almost moveless on the unmoving sea, and Bonaparte, with characteristic energy, made an attempt to pluck victory from under the very shadow of defeat. The French batteries thundered on the town with redoubled vehemence, and an attempt was once more made to carry the breach.

Lannes led his division against the battered tower, General Rimbaud took his grenadiers straight up the breach. The French came on with so high a daring that it seemed as if nothing could stop their rush. But Lannes was wounded, Rimbaud was slain, and the attack failed. For a time, however, the struggle was so fierce and equal that Sidney Smith landed every man he could spare from the guns of his ships, and led them, pike in hand, to the breach. At that moment Hassan Bey's troops from the Egyptian fleet were actually in their boats pulling for the town, but they were at a great distance, and the Turks were giving way at the breach. The ridge of smoke-blackened stones was held by a few sailors and Turks, who scorned to yield, and, as

Sidney Smith puts it, "the muzzles of their muskets were touching those of the enemy, and the spear-heads of the standards were locked." Sidney Smith's reinforcement, however, restored the fight, and the French fell back with grievous loss. Sidney Smith, pursuing his familiar tactics, dashed out in eager sortie, some middies from the *Theseus*, armed with hand-grenades, playing a very active part in the bloody scuffle.

Bonaparte, however, even yet would not accept defeat. From the shot-wrecked wall the defenders of Acre could see a cluster of French generals standing on what was known as Cœur de Lion's mound, Bonaparte himself angrily gesticulating in the centre of the cluster. Kleber's grenadiers, famous for their steadfast valour at the battle of Mount Tabor, were to be led as a last resource against the breach. It was nearly sunset when Kleber's grenadiers, a living column, black from mere mass, and moving forward swiftly without shout or tumult, came on. At first no shot was fired from the defence. Sidney Smith's plan was to allow the head of the column to reach and overflow the crest of the breach, then a regiment of a thousand Janissaries was to be thrown on its front, and the whole extent of its flank was to be torn with musketry fire.

Up the breach moved the steady column. The leading files leaped down on the inner side; then the battle awoke. The Janissaries flung themselves

furiously on the French, disordered by their leap; musketry and cannon-shot tormented the column throughout its whole length. "Kleber," says a French account, "with the gait of a giant, and his thick head of hair, had taken his post, sword in hand, on the bank of the breach, and animated the assailants. The noise of the cannon, the shouts, the rage of our soldiers, the yells of the Turks, mingled themselves with the bursts of his thundering voice." Bonaparte himself, standing on a gun in the nearest French battery, watched the desperate struggle. His aide-de-camp, Arrighi, was shot at his side; others fell near him, but still Bonaparte watched the tormented column, quivering through its whole length. Now it stops! It begins to ebb backwards Single figures break from the mass and run forward, gesticulating, up to the crest of the breach, from which the red musketry flashes incessantly. But the column is now flowing down the breach. Kleber himself, black with gunpowder and voiceless with fury, is swept away in the tumult. The last attack on Acre had failed!

On May 20, Bonaparte, having burned the carriages of his battering train and thrown his guns into the sea, was in full retreat. The siege had lasted sixty days, and for most of that time the combatants were, to use Sidney Smith's phrase, "within stone's throw of each other." No less than forty assaults were delivered by the French, and no

less than twenty-four times the besieged sallied out in desperate sortie on the besiegers. One single spasm of hand-to-hand fighting lasted twenty-five hours! Bonaparte lost in the siege over 4000 soldiers and some of his finest officers, including eight generals. With the audacious lying familiar to him he tried to deny his own defeat. He assured his soldiers in a proclamation that they had really taken Acre! They had razed its fortifications; if they had not actually entered the town, it was only because it was not really worth the trouble! But his defeat was signal and overwhelming, and to the end of his life Bonaparte himself remembered it with anger as having "spoiled his destiny." He referred to Sidney Smith as "a young fool who was capable of invading France with 800 men."

But Bonaparte's anger only proves how much his failure stung him. The story is current that during the siege Sidney Smith invited Bonaparte to meet him in single combat, and Bonaparte replied that if a Marlborough could be produced he might be persuaded to encounter him. Sidney Smith himself denied this story; but it seems clear that he wrote a letter to Bonaparte after the siege was raised which breathed a triumph which was natural but not very dignified. Sidney Smith, it must be remembered, had been held, in a very unjust and cruel fashion, a prisoner in the Temple at Paris, and had escaped in time to meet Bonaparte at Acre. When Bonaparte was fall-

ing back from the stubbornly held breaches, Sidney Smith wrote to him: "Could you have thought that a poor prisoner in a cell of the Temple prison—an unfortunate for whom you refused, for a single moment, to give yourself any concern, being at the same time able to render him a signal service, since you were then all-powerful—could you have thought, I say, that this same man would have become your antagonist, and have compelled you, in the midst of the sands of Syria, to raise the siege of a miserable, almost defenceless town?" The process of writing that letter probably gave Sidney Smith himself much pleasure, and its receipt could not have added to Bonaparte's comfort, as, with sullen and shrunken forces, he turned his face southward, leaving behind him under the blackened walls of Acre the bravest of his soldiers, and his own brightest hopes.

Seringapatam, it may be added, was stormed and Tippoo Sahib slain on May 4, 1799, just as the siege of Acre was drawing to a close. Both in India and Egypt, that is, Napoleon's dream was almost simultaneously wrecked.

Sidney Smith was thanked by both Houses of Parliament for his services at Acre, and was granted a pension of £1000 a year; but perhaps his best reward—a tribute sufficient to constitute fame for any man—was Bonaparte's own bitter sentence—"that man made me miss my destiny!" Napoleon's description of Sidney Smith as the man that marred

his destiny is, of course, an absurd inversion of facts. It would be more accurate to say that Sidney Smith, when he defeated Bonaparte at Acre, made the dazzling career of Napoleon which followed possible. He turned him back, in a word, from a wild scheme which, if it ever had been possible, was now beyond even the dreams of a French imagination. Bonaparte could only muster 12,000 troops for his Syrian campaign in 1799. Many fell in battle, more perished by disease. In four months his losses amounted to 5000 men. Even if he had stormed Acre, what chance was there of marching to Damascus and Aleppo, and of returning to Europe *via* Constantinople?

Sidney Smith's repulse at Acre sent Bonaparte back to Egypt, to the great victory at Aboukir, and so to Paris, the true realm for his genius, to the Revolution of Brumaire, and to the Imperial throne. Bonaparte fell back from Acre, furious and defeated, on May 20; on October 9 he landed in France; within four weeks he overthrew the Directory; on December 13 he was First Consul. When Sidney Smith, in a word, held so triumphantly the bloody breaches of Acre against Bonaparte, he was practically giving him the Consulate and the Empire.

During the period covering the siege of Acre, Bruix, the French Minister of Marine, broke suddenly out of Brest, and effected that mysterious cruise which might easily have changed the whole fortunes

SIR SIDNEY SMITH

From an engraving after the portrait by J. Opie, R.A.

of the French expedition to Egypt, but which, as a matter of fact, had no other result than that of puzzling and exasperating every British admiral in the Mediterranean. Lord Bridport, with sixteen ships of the line, was holding a great French fleet strictly locked up in Brest during the month of April. On the 25th a fresh north-east gale drove him twelve miles westward of Ushant. That night Bruix, with a fleet of thirty-five ships—twenty-five of them being line-of-battle ships—slipped out through the Passage du Raz, and at day-break on the morning of the 26th a British frigate caught sight of his rearmost ship just as it vanished to the south. The enemy was at sea, and every British blockade in the Mediterranean was in peril!

Bridport, persuaded that Ireland was threatened, sailed at once for Cape Clear, where the Channel fleet gathered round him. Keith, with fifteen ships, was blockading a Spanish fleet of nineteen ships in Cadiz; and on the morning of May 4, Bruix, with his twenty-five line-of-battle ships, was in sight. Here was a British fleet of fifteen ships, that is, on a lee shore, a hard gale blowing, with twenty-five French line-of-battle ships to windward, and a Spanish fleet of nineteen line-of-battle ships ready to break out to leeward! Keith was apparently caught betwixt the upper and nether millstones. But he was a gallant sailor, if not a

great commander. The gale, he reckoned, would prevent the Spanish fleet coming out, and the French were not seamen enough to run down and engage even a fleet so greatly inferior to themselves in numbers, on a lee shore with a north-wester raging. So Keith, calculating all the chances, doggedly hung on to his blockade, a memorable example of daring. Bruix could trust neither the tactical skill of his captains nor the gunnery of his crews, and, after tossing for some perplexed hours in the offing, bore away for the Mediterranean.

On May 5 a dense haze lay on the Straits of Gibraltar, but St. Vincent himself, who held the chief command in the Mediterranean, saw through rifts in the fog one huge French liner after another sweep past. Here was a great French fleet at last in the Mediterranean, and iron-nerved as he was, St. Vincent trembled for his blockading squadrons. A squadron of four ships was guarding Minorca; a small squadron under Troubridge was blockading Naples; a still smaller one under Ball was off Malta. Nelson himself, with a single ship, was off Palermo. The course lay straight open for the French to Alexandria, and Bruix might appear in Aboukir Bay with a more powerful fleet than that which, under Brueys, had perished there. If the Spanish fleet found, or forced, its way out of Cadiz, Bruix would have under his flag no less that forty-four line-of-battle ships, and the whole

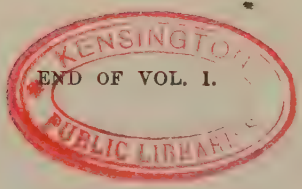
British system of blockades would have gone to pieces!

St. Vincent abandoned his more exposed blockades, and called his scattered squadrons together. The Spanish fleet immediately put out from Cadiz, and sailed for Cartagena, but twelve ships out of seventeen were more or less disabled by rough weather in that brief passage.

Bruix, himself, scarcely knew what use to make of his power of free action now he had gained it. He had the distressing consciousness of being not so much the hunter as the hunted. As a result he did nothing. Amazing good fortune, indeed, attended him during his agitated cruise. He succeeded in joining the Spanish fleet in Cartagena without having sighted a British squadron; he threw some supplies into Genoa. But he feared to risk everything by boldly running up the Mediterranean to Egypt. On August 13, with his fleet increased by sixteen line-of-battle ships, he reached Brest again in safety. But from May 4 to August 13—for more than three months, that is—Bruix held the open sea. "The Brest squadron," wrote St. Vincent, "had such a game to play at Malta and Sicily, that I trembled for the fate of our ships employed there." But Bruix had even greater possibilities before him. In a sense he held the fate of Egypt in his hand. Yet he did nothing, partly from lack of nerve, and partly because he mis-

trusted the quality of his own ships and captains. But the course of history might have been changed if, say, a French admiral with a spark of Nelson's fire had been in command of those forty-four line-of-battle ships which Bruix led ignobly back to Brest.

END OF VOL. I.



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